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THE INDEPENDENT

Thursday 4 June 1998 45p (IR 50p) No 3,628

Disaster at 125mph: 80 dead

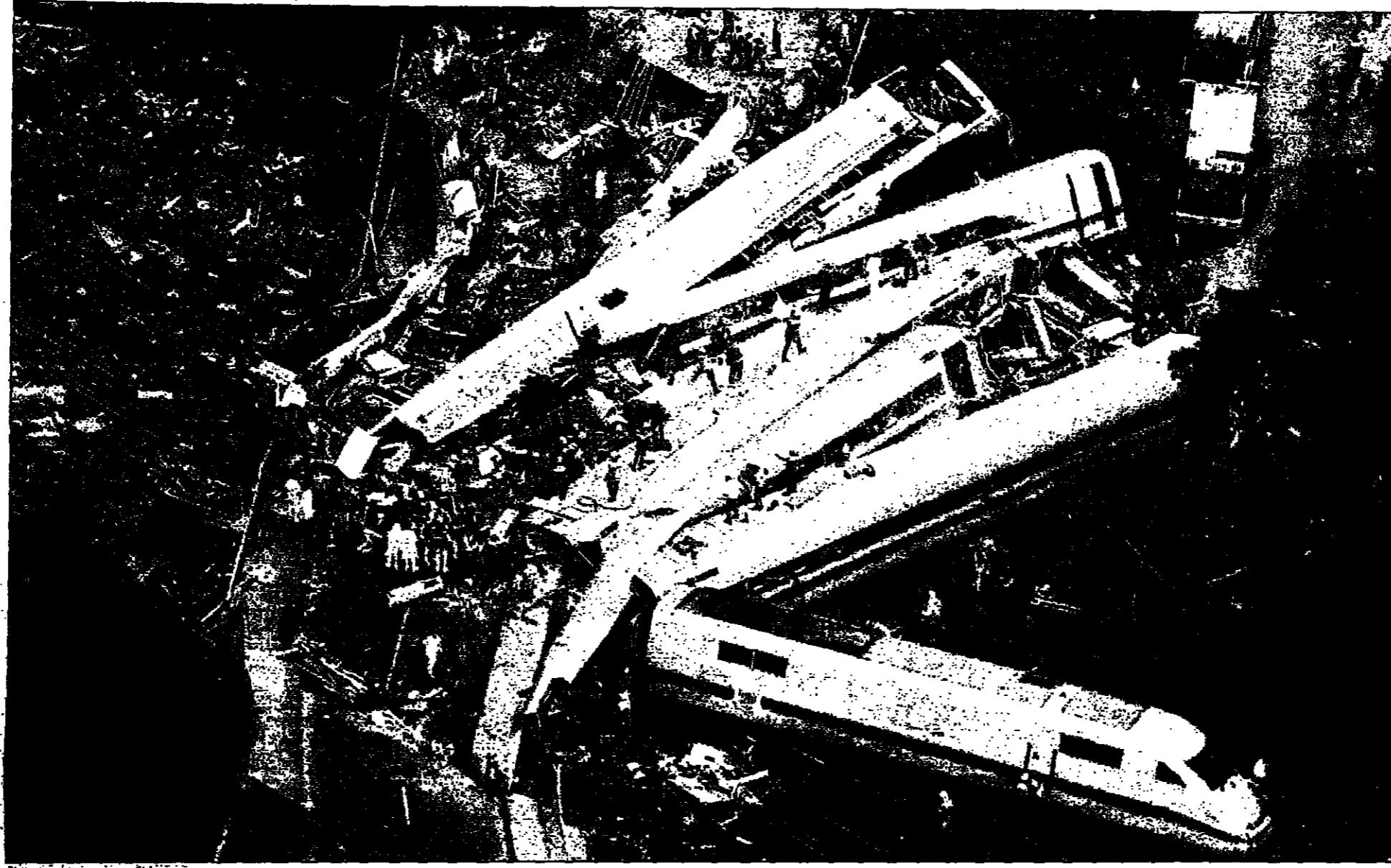
By James Roberts

AT LEAST 80 people died and 200 were seriously injured yesterday when Germany's fastest train met with disaster after 13 of its coaches buckled into an overhead bridge.

Several hours after the crash, and with scores of injured still trapped in the horrifying crush of wreckage, it was still unclear how the disaster happened. The Inter City Express was traveling at 125mph towards the station in Eschede, a small town 35 miles north of Hanover, on its journey from Munich to Hamburg, when, according to eyewitness reports, a car ploughed off the road bridge that passed over the track, and

Inside

Silent carnage among the wild roses.
Anatomy of a disaster.
Pages 14 and 15.



Rescue workers search through the wreckage of the train and bridge near the town of Eschede in northern Germany

Photograph: Bild-Zeitung

those trapped inside could be reached. One fire fighter said they were afraid how many children were still buried in the wreckage, which was spread out along the four straight tracks for several hundred yards.

"I was in the kitchen peeling potatoes when I heard a train go by faster than ever before," said Hannelore Bonkewitz. "Then I heard a huge bang. I ran outside and saw a giant cloud of smoke."

"I ran out and saw all the immense suffering," she added. "The rescue workers asked me to get blankets. I brought all the blankets and sheets that I own. I saw a man trying to climb out of the train. His hands were covered with blood. No one else could get out."

"It was awful. I saw a small girl who had been badly hurt being treated. It was horrible," said Gerd Knoop, a 57-year-old rescue worker, as tears began to stream down his cheeks.

Walter Stroetmann, another worker, said he had never seen anything like it. "This shakes me to the core," he said. "I had to collect body parts. Legs and arms. They were from men, women and children."

"We are going to try to lift the bridge to find survivors," said one firefighter. "We can't give up hope of finding anyone who may still be alive."

"I have to admit that this is affecting me very much," said Juergen Frohns, a spokesman for German Railways, trying to fight back tears. "I couldn't bear to look at all the dead people."

The German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, who arrived in Italy yesterday for talks with the Prime Minister, Romano Prodi, made no immediate comment on the crash.

hit one of the first carriages. The nose of the train had cleared the bridge, but 13 carriages were derailed, jackknifed, and smashed upwards into the road.

However a police spokesman, Joachim Lindenberg, offered a different account, saying the train had been forced upwards into the overpass with sudden massive force, and that a car parked on the road had been brought plunging on to the tracks. The car, he said, belonged to a rail employee who was working along the tracks. A car was found under the wreckage,

so it was expected that investigators would be able to establish how the first impact occurred.

Further evidence emerged from a survivor, who had been travelling in the second carriage.

Wolf Schilbener said that two minutes before the accident he had heard "a tremendous rattling and shaking" in the train.

"There was a huge cloud of smoke and my first thought

was how do I get out," he said. "The window was cracked but there was a stone and I used that to break it open further. Thank god, a conductor came past at that time and he pulled me out.

When I saw what had happened I realised how lucky I had been to get out at all."

The disaster happened at 11 o'clock under bright blue skies on a warm spring morning. Af-

terwards, a thick cloud of dust hung over the tracks, and an eerie silence, broken by the wail of ambulance sirens and helicopters. More than 800 rescue workers, among them 20 British

soldiers and army doctors from a nearby base at Celle, battled to free dead and injured from the mangled white carriages. A crane lifted massive chunks of concrete off the cars so that

Blair chided by Labour MP

By Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

THE choreography of the Commons, with Labour MPs tamely dancing to the tune of ministers and whips, was attacked by a brave Government backbencher last night.

Andrew Mackinlay, Labour MP for Thurrock, attracted roars of support from across the House when he tackled Tony Blair during Prime Minister's question time yesterday - urging him to endorse greater independence among his own MPs.

Defying current Commons customs, Mr Mackinlay reprimanded Mr Blair how they had deplored the "fawning, obsequious, soft-ball, well-rehearsed, planted questions" that Tory MPs put to John Major when he was Prime Minister.

He then challenged Mr Blair to "encourage, rather than discourage, loyal Labour backbenchers who wish to seek and to provide scrutiny and accountability in this place, without fear or favour and without partial affection."

The Prime Minister replied: "Can I say I fully respect my honourable friend's independence of mind, and I shall do my very best to make sure he retains it."

That was taken by some cynical MPs as a broad hint that he would never offer Mr Mackinlay a ministerial job, and the MP later told *The Independent* that people would have to make their own minds up about the answer.

"I thought it was rather unusual," Mr Mackinlay said. "The Prime Minister was clearly having to weigh up every word."

But he did say: "I think there is a problem of the choreography of the Commons. More and more is being programmed and planned by the two frontbenches, and Parliament is being diminished by it."

He was concerned about the ability of select committees to act as independent checks on the executive, but he said the greatest example of the parliamentary chorus line came during the Prime Minister to sign today."

"What happens with questions? Every day, MPs enter a



Andrew Mackinlay warned of "fawning, planted questions".

raffle to put questions to ministers or the Prime Minister, two weeks in advance. Every day, parliamentary private secretaries - ministers' political assistants - hawk around pro forma questions which ministers want to be asked.

"I thought it was rather unusual," Mr Mackinlay said. "The Prime Minister was clearly having to weigh up every word."

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The find - a skull dating

Class size pledge 'won't work'

By Judith Judd
Education Editor

ONE OF the Government's main election pledges - cuts in class sizes - will not be met unless thousands more pupils are taught in mixed-age classes, says a report published today.

The 70-page study from consultants Coopers & Lybrand also predicts that the Prime Minister's promise to cut infant class sizes to a maximum of 30 by the end of this Parliament will restrict parents' choice of school.

Yesterday, the Office for Standards in Education

(Ofsted) warned that mixed-age classes were more difficult to teach and might jeopardise the Government's new literacy hour.

More classes of children of different ages will transform the way primary schools are organised in many places, says the report. At present just under a quarter of infants are in mixed-age classes which are generally unpopular with parents.

The report examines different ways in which local education authorities can achieve the reductions being demanded by the Government. Half of pri-

mary schools have one oversized infant class. It argues: "In our view the policy of reducing class sizes is likely to result in a rise in the incidence of mixed-age classes in primary schools. In turn, this is likely to generate a debate about the advantages and disadvantages of mixed age teaching and the additional demands it may place on schools."

A spokesman for Ofsted said: "Our view is that it is more difficult to teach mixed-age classes partly because of the range of attainment and because of the range of emotion-

al development. They will also make it more difficult to do the whole-class teaching required for the literacy hour."

The report, commissioned by the Local Government Association, suggests that other ways of reducing class size will limit parents' choice of school. More than half of all classes with 30 or more pupils are the result of parental appeals over admissions.

To provide an extra class in each school with an oversized class would be prohibitively expensive, but to provide extra classes only in some schools in an area might cut across

parental choice. The cheapest and quickest solution would be to use empty places in less popular schools but that, too, would restrict parents' choice.

Graham Lane, the association's chairman, who will meet ministers today, said: "The Government must take note of this document and its practical, detailed issues or it will not deliver its election pledge. There is sufficient money in the system but ministers need to address the problems of mixed-age schooling and admission appeals."

Leading article, page 20
Education+, in *The Eye*

Does skull hold secret of the missing link?

By David Keys
Archaeology Correspondent

SCIENTISTS in Africa may have uncovered the origins of our species of humanity - Homo sapiens.

Excavations in Eritrea in north-east Africa have unearthed the earliest human remains to display any specific Homo sapiens characteristics.

The find - a skull dating

from one million years ago - appears to be from the crucial hitherto undiscovered evolutionary phase in which our ape-man ancestors developed into an ancestral version of Homo sapiens.

The early date of one million BC will surprise many human evolution specialists who were expecting the changeover from ape-man to ancestral forms of our own species to have occurred

a good 300,000 years later. The new discovery therefore suggests that Homo sapiens was beginning to evolve out of earlier hominid forms some time before 1,000,000BC - perhaps between 1.2 and 1.1 million years ago.

The skull - unearthed by Italian paleontologist Ernesto Abbate - has facial bone and some skull shape characteristics which are associated with early

Homo sapiens, but has many other characteristics which are typical of early Homo sapiens' ape man Homo erectus forebears.

Over the past 5,000,000 years up to 20 different species of human have existed. At the time that the Eritrean individual was alive there were at least two or three species in existence. Our species Homo sapiens is simply the sole survivor.

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INSIDE GUIDE: WEATHER, P2 • CROSSWORDS, P32 AND EYE P10 • TODAY'S TELEVISION, EYE P12 • FULL CONTENTS, P2

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28 pages of film
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■ Cut!
The Censorship
Roadshow comes
to town

■ Sing
yourself horse
Rock stars who
play cowboys

■ China crisis
Richard Gere
causes Oriental
upsets



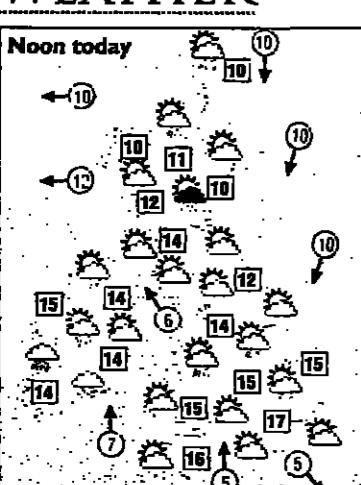
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Recycled paper made up
41.4% of the raw material
for UK newspapers in the
first half of 1997.

WEATHER



Scotland will have sunny spells and scattered showers. Northern and eastern coasts will be rather cool. Northern Ireland and northern England will also be cool and, after a mainly dry start there may be a few showers, some of them heavy. The rest of the country will be warmer with spells of sunshine, but there will be a risk of showers. However, most of the showers will be light and much of the south will stay dry all day.

Outlook for the next few days
Tomorrow will be warmer, particularly in the south. Northern Ireland and western Scotland will be cloudy with some light rain, but elsewhere it should be warm, dry and sunny. However there will be a risk of thundery showers in the south-east later. Northern Ireland and western Scotland will be stay cloudy on Saturday with further rain at times. The rest of the country will be drier and brighter but it will be quite cool in the east.

British Isles weather

Aberdeen	C 10.50	Gurness	Sh 15.59
Angus	D 9.48	Inverness	Sh 15.59
Ayr	C 13.55	Ipswich	C 17.63
Belfast	C 10.50	Isles of Scilly	F 14.57
Birmingham	C 17.63	Jersey	C 16.61
Blackpool	D 12.54	Liverpool	C 14.57
Bournemouth	C 16.61	London	Sh 16.61
Brighton	Sh 15.59	Manchester	C 12.54
Bristol	Sh 14.57	Newcastle	C 9.48
Cardiff	C 16.61	Oxford	Sh 13.55
Carlisle	R 10.50	Plymouth	C 15.59
Dober	C 17.63	Scarborough	D 9.48
Babbis	C 11.52	Southampton	C 16.61
Edinburgh	C 12.54	Southend	C 17.63
Exeter	C 12.54	Stornoway	C 8.46
Glasgow	C 12.54	York	R 9.48

Air quality and Pollen

Yesterday's readings	Mo	Pe	Do
London	Mod	Mod	Mod
S England	Mod	Mod	Mod
C England	Mod	Mod	Mod
Scotland	Mod	Mod	Mod
N Ireland	Mod	Mod	Mod

Outlook for today

Mod/Med

Low/Med

Med

Low/Med

Mod

Low/Med

Mod/Med

Low/Med

Mod

'What a week... first it was Ginger Spice, then Gazza... and now me'

By Paul McCann
and Janine Gibson

THE Sun's editor, Stuart Higgins, parted company with the newspaper yesterday amid debate about whether he jumped or was pushed.

News International, owner of the Sun, said in a statement that Mr Higgins had been planning to resign for some months, yet reporters on the tabloid saw him in tears when he announced what he described as his "unexpected" departure.

Flanked by his deputies Andy Coulson and Rebekah Wade, Mr Higgins, 42, told journalists that he had given a lot of leaving speeches in recent months, but had never ex-

Murdoch and he spent the night together on the newsroom floor making the paper up.

Friends say he is the most unlikely Sun editor, describing him as quiet and self-effacing. In contrast Mr Higgins, who replaced the equally flamboyant Kelvin MacKenzie, was known for a party piece that involved getting down on all fours and biting people's ankles.

Mr Higgins was dubbed "Huggy the human sponge" by Mr MacKenzie during his reign for his ability to soak up abuse. Mr MacKenzie even went so far as to put a photograph of Mr Higgins, then a relatively junior reporter, in the newspaper alongside his direct line phone number.

Readers were invited to ring and give him abuse and he received more than 1,000 calls.

Mr Higgins was renowned in Fleet Street for the strength of his royal contacts. During the acrimonious war of the press conducted by the Prince and Princess of Wales, Mr Higgins was widely believed to have a direct line to the Charles camp.

However, under Mr Higgins the Sun lacked the sure-footed populism that marked its heyday in the Eighties. It was forced by its owner to align with Tony Blair at the last election and has recently started to take tentative moves up-market.

It has been experimenting with new photographic styles for its topless page three models and increasingly drops them completely. Internally there has been a debate raging about whether to end the page-three pictures permanently.

Yesterday's edition was evidence of the paper's sometimes uncertain approach. It is rumoured to have paid £130,000 to buy Paul Gascoigne's story after he was left out of the England squad and so needed to milk him as much as it could. Yesterday that meant draping him in an England flag, a Sun plastic hat and

David Yelland, new editor of the Sun

pected to be giving his own. "What a week," he told staff. "First Geri, then Gazza and now me."

Mr Higgins, who has been editor for five years, is to be replaced by David Yelland, currently deputy editor of the Rupert Murdoch-owned New York Post. Mr Yelland, 35, is a former City reporter on the Sun who became acquainted with Rupert Murdoch by interviewing him each year when News Corporation's results were published. He went to New York in 1993.

He also caught the media mogul's eye when he was acting editor at the New York Post on the night that Diana, Princess of Wales died. Mr



Stuart Higgins, outgoing editor of the Sun, who says that after five years 'this is the right time to make a change'

reproducing some doggerel.

There has been speculation that his fast-rising deputy, Rebekah Wade, was being groomed for Mr Higgins' job.

Piers Morgan, editor of the Mirror, paid tribute yesterday: "In my opinion Stuart has been

one of the most brilliant tabloid journalists of his generation. I am very surprised he has resigned. I intend to do everything in my power to give his successor a good kicking."

News International maintains that Mr Higgins will be

promoted to another position within the company. Rupert Murdoch paid fulsome tribute to him yesterday: "Stuart has done a terrific job throughout his years at The Sun. He is a brilliant newspaperman with a great future and we are sorry

he has reached this decision."

In his official statement Mr Higgins said: "It's been incredibly hard work and I have had a wonderful time, but I am certain this is the right time in my life to make a change."

Packer's target, page 17



Decline of red-tops

By Janine Gibson
Media Correspondent

branding itself as "Dedicated to the People of Britain".

The slow decline in tabloid sales is not new. Last month, the three mass-market tabloids collectively sold 6.6 million copies. Ten years ago it was 8.2 million and 15 years ago these titles together sold 8,990,468.

The beneficiaries of the tabloid defectors are the mid-market and even broadsheet newspapers. The Daily Mail's circulation is over 2.2 million, 6 per cent higher than last year and within 20,000 copies a day of overtaking the Mirror.

The newspaper industry believes that a better-educated and more affluent population has been trading up its daily tastes. In an attempt to stem the flow, the red-tops have been trying to drag themselves upmarket: the Mirror now runs business pages and the Sun is debating whether to drop its topless page three girls.

Raunchy clichés are banned as 'Daily Star' moves up-market

FANS of the tabloid cliché are set to be disappointed from next week when the Daily Star is redesigned and throws out some of the most over-used terms in journalism, writes Paul McCann.

A memo circulated to staff this week bans them from using tabloid classics like "raunchy", "page-three stunner", "curvy", "hand cap", "motor-mouth" and "mega".

There is also to be a moratorium on the use of the word "lesbo" and other derogatory terms for lesbians.

Instead of sticking to its strange tabloid code the newspaper's journalists are now expected to "free up" their writing style.

The list of banned words is part of a redesign package re-



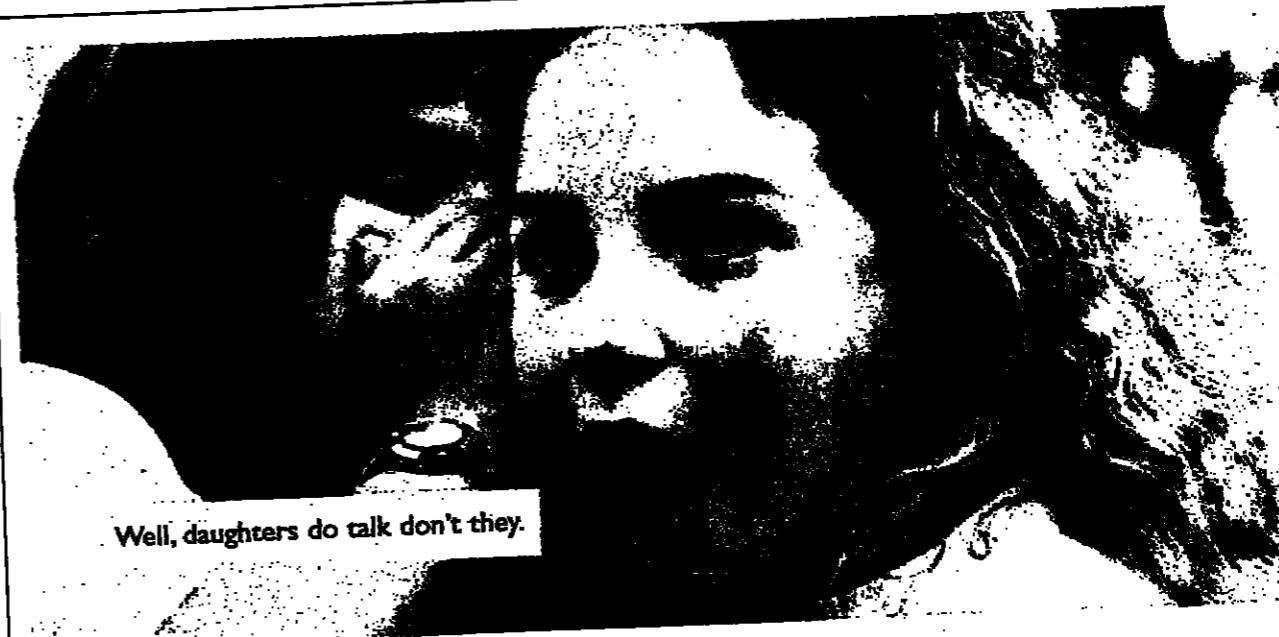
Daily Star will have a redesigned masthead, intended to make it look more like a European news magazine. It will also have more colour pages and more pictures.

The idea of the newspaper's management is to move it slightly up-market into the niche that they believe is being created by the Mirror and the Sun also moving more up-market.

"It's about getting rid of any final vestiges of the Sunday Sport link," one of the newspaper's journalists said yesterday.

In the Eighties the Star's then owners plumped the depths of newspaper journalism by hiring the team behind the soft-porn Sunday Sport to revamp the Star.

However, in recent years it has managed to go for weeks on end having "envy" Baywatch "stunner", Pamela Anderson, on its front page every day.



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Connery's £57,600 for SNP

By Diana Blamires

THE ACTOR Sean Connery contributes about £4,800 a month – £57,600 in a full year – to the Scottish National Party, it disclosed yesterday.

The revelation may go some way to explaining why the Scottish-born actor did not receive a knighthood when the Labour government came to power. This was despite a long-standing recommendation from the Tories that he should be honoured for his services to cinema and to Scotland. Reigniting the row, the Scottish National Party yesterday claimed there was "discrimination" by political parties against opponents.

SNP vice-convenor for fund-raising George Reid disclosed Connery's level of fundraising to the Committee on Standards in Public Life, taking place in Edinburgh.

"He pays this party about £4,800 a month. This is in the accounts made available to this committee. He is quite open about it," said Mr Reid.

Headed by Lord Neill, the committee is taking evidence in Scotland for two days as part of its study into the funding of political parties.

In a written submission, the SNP said: "Members of the committee will be aware of the disgraceful prejudice shown by New



Sean Connery: Knighthood nomination passed over by Labour government

must also be effective from any proposed start date for publication."

In oral evidence to the committee, the Scottish Nationalists raised the hypothetical case of a lottery jackpot winner who stipulated anonymity in collecting his prize – but also wanted to give a substantial sum to the SNP.

Mr Reid told the committee that although Connery had been nominated for a knighthood by the outgoing Conservative government, the proposal had been "declined" after he played a major role in last year's referendum campaign.

"Clearly, it gives rise to concerns in the SNP about discrimination. People should be able to contribute openly to political parties but should not be discriminated against for doing so."

He said the fears of discrimination arose from the fact that large parts of Scotland were in the "grip" of one party, and had been so for some time.

The Scottish Labour Party attacked the SNP in its evidence to the committee which said mandatory disclosure by parties of their audited accounts and the source and size of large donations should be a "first step" in the direction of reform. Labour said the SNP had been too secretive.

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High-earning barristers will come under scrutiny as House of Lords investigates legal aid

Lawyers' pay: Is it an injustice?

By Kim Sengupta

IT GUARANTEES controversy, recriminations and headlines: why are top lawyers paid so much, and in particular paid much more than other similar top professionals such as surgeons.

In two weeks, the House of Lords will hold an unprecedented and public inquiry into the thorny question of legal aid fees being claimed by some of the country's leading barristers.

Mr learned friends are not taking this lightly. The four QC's whose fees have been called into question, high-profile left-wing barrister Michael Mansfield, Christopher Sallon, Peter Feinberg and Richard Henriques, have instructed fellow QC James Munby to represent them. And the Bar Council has hired one of the highest paid advocates around, Sydney Kentridge, to watch over the profession's interests.

Much is at stake. The Law Lords will be deciding whether barristers' legal aid fees should be on a par with the rate for private practice, or brought into line with other professionals paid from public funds. If they agree on the latter, it could mean a sizeable drop in the earnings of many QCs.

Inevitably this has brought into focus how much more top barristers earn than others paid from the public purse. The most obvious examples are senior doctors, the custodians of the nation's health, who on average earn far less, and in many cases work far longer hours.

Lawyers were in turn surprised and then resentful when one of their own, the Lord Chancellor, criticised their "fat cat" lifestyles. There were charges of hypocrisy as Lord Irvine was himself one of the "supersilks" earning close to or more than a million pounds a year before he took up office in Tony Blair's Government.

The Golden Circle, as they are called, have not been affected that much by the attacks of Lord Irvine and others, and continue to be in demand, sometimes booked up for months in advance.

Of the four whose fees triggered the House of Lords enquiry, Mr Henriques led the league table of QCs' earnings from legal aid in 1995/96, earning more than £500,000. He claims this related to more than one year. In 1996/97 Mr Feinberg's earnings from legal aid were between £350,000 and £399,000. Mr Mansfield, as a celebrated civil rights lawyer, is often in the media on shows like the *Moral Maze*, and Mr Sallon is a former chairman of the Bar Council's public affairs committee.

But they are not regarded by any means as the top overall earners in the profession. Among these are Jonathan Sumption, who carries the sobriquet of once being described as "the cleverest man in England" by a colleague. Called to the Bar in 1974, he had become a silk within the astonishingly short time of 10 years, and had broken through the £1m-a-year barrier by 1994. He is now booked up for more than a year in advance by clients in the banking and financial services sector.

George Carman's latest victory was for the *Guardian* and Granada TV against Jonathan Aitken. The libel specialist has appeared in a number of high-profile cases including the successful defence of the *Sun* in the action brought by *EastEnders* actress Gillian Tayforth. He is believed to charge clients up to £10,000 a day with an additional £50,000 retainer.

It is different in the world of medicine. There a consultant in an NHS hospital will be getting between £44,000 and £57,000 a year. On top of that around 27% of them will be receiving a merit award of £54,910 which is normally given on a five-yearly basis.

The senior doctors can, of course, also make money from private practice, but across the board this amounts to an average of less than £40,000 a year. Plastic and orthopaedic surgeons have more chance of making big money in the private field than colleagues in other fields.



Anthony Stephen Grabiner, QC

Age 53. Married with three sons and one daughter. London School of Economics and Lincoln's Inn Recorder since 1990, and described as "one of the most expensive silks in the world". Chambers at Essex Court, Temple, charges £800-plus an hour specialising in commercial law. Annual earnings said to be more than £1m a year. Has represented Robert Maxwell against the Board of Trade, Rupert Murdoch to curb picketing outside his Wapping newspaper plant, and Morgan Grenfell in the Guinness crisis. When Lord Irvine went to the woolsack one of his last cases was taken over by Mr Grabiner. He is known as diligent and thorough on detail, and often works late into the night.



Sir Magdi Yacoub, surgeon

Age 63. Married with one son and two daughters. Cairo University. Foundation Professor of Cardiothoracic Surgery at Royal Brompton Hospital, and consultant surgeon at Harefield Hospital, Middlesex. Regarded as one of the most eminent heart surgeons in the world. As a National Health Service consultant he earns around £57,800 a year. He also gets a yearly A+ merit award of £54,910. Sir Magdi is also involved in private practice where, it is believed he earns around £150,000 to £200,000 a year. Donates some of it to NHS research projects at his hospital. Said to work seven days a week, carrying out operations when necessary during the night. A "normal" working day is from 7am to 10pm.

Sir Magdi Yacoub is perhaps the highest profile surgeon in Britain, with the opportunity to charge extremely large fees to an international clientele for his specialist skills in heart surgery. But his basic salary remains the consultant's maximum of £57,000 a year plus the merit award. Colleagues estimate that he probably makes between £150,000 and £200,000 a year from his private surgery, mainly carried out at weekends. But some of that is ploughed back into NHS research at the two hospitals where he works, the Harefield and the Brompton.

Not all bodies in law are against parity between lawyers and other professionals like doctors when it comes to legal aid. The Law Society will be putting in a written submission

to the Lords inquiry. Russell Wallman, the head of policy,

said: "We think a fairly reasonably experienced lawyer might earn the same as a GP and the very best barrister or solicitor the same as a top hospital consultant."

was permitted to write cheques for £1m-plus.

The court heard that Mr Kingsley became aware of the outstanding debts in September 1986. He said that promises had been made that the debt would be paid off by the end of October 1986 and that it would be "foolish" to sue at that point.

"We always hoped to get settlement without litigation. Casinos generally do not want to be seen to be suing their clients. It is extremely bad PR."

The dishonoured cheques were finally returned on 5 January 1987 but Mr Kingsley still did not contemplate legal action. The following July Mr Khashoggi offered a property in Spain as part of the settlement but Mr Kingsley said it was not suitable.

In December 1990, Mr Kingsley sent a fax to Mr Khashoggi asking him about the debt. Mr Khashoggi had explained that he was having financial difficulties as he was involved in the US in a Congressional hearing over the Iran-Iraq affair and in criminal proceedings against him and Imelda Marcos, of which he was cleared in 1990.

Legal action was finally begun in December 1991. Mr Kingsley admitted that the company had not sent any letters asking Mr Khashoggi for the money, nor had they sent a solicitor's letter or threatened legal action before issuing the writ.

"The man had had enough chances to make some kind of payment and we had arrived at the end of the line and decided we were not going to get paid except through litigation," he said.

The case continues.

Khashoggi 'welcome in spite of £3m debt'

By Kate Watson-Smyth

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The case continues.

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Fast track to Europe: Government finds extra £140m for high-speed scheme and promises new services from north and Midlands

So, is
this our
gateway to
Europe?

By Clare Garner

AT THE far end of Swanscombe High Street is Galley Hill viewing point – a ledge with a barrier, the kind you would expect to find at a scenic spot in the Lake District. Below are factories, warehouses, chimneys and waste land, with the Thames as a backdrop.

Hardly one of Britain's famously beautiful landscapes but one which is being transformed into the gateway to Europe now that the Channel Tunnel rail link is to be built.

The new International Domestic Passenger Station – one of the largest private-sector initiatives of recent times in the UK – is to open in 2003. Adja-



The site at Ebbsfleet where the International Domestic Passenger Station, serving the Channel Tunnel, will be built

Photograph: Brian Harris

cent will be Bluewater, the largest shopping centre in Europe, due to open next spring, possibly a major leisure development with ski slopes and a casino, and as many as 13,000 new homes.

Not that it matters to the local villagers – so they think. "My personal viewpoint is that it's not going to affect us," said Ketan Patel, sub-postmaster in Swanscombe. "If anything, it's going to help us that Ebbsfleet is so close. You know what people are like if they've got an hour

and a half to wait, wandering round, seeing what's in the area."

Barbara Gunner, who owns Barb's Sandwich Bar next door, agreed. "We could do with a bit of business," she said.

Mike Crosby, an independent Dartford borough coun-

cillor representing Galley Hill in Swanscombe, seemed to be the only person in the High Street yesterday who had reservations about the impact of the massive developments on his doorstep. "Everything is happening in this little one-mile

corridor between the A2 and the river. Nobody seems concerned. Everyone's been on a high, hyping it. I don't think anyone's given serious thought to the traffic generation ... It's already a nightmare, but soon traffic will be everywhere."

By Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

quire LCR to come up with proposals before the end of the year for regional Eurostar services which will link the northern and Midlands areas of Britain with Paris and Brussels.

"This is an agreement snatched from the ashes of LCR's collapse," Mr Prescott said.

Railtrack will build and buy the first phase of the high-speed line linking the Channel Tunnel to Waterloo. The company, which announced profits of £388m – up from £346m in the previous year – will also have the right to take over the second phase of the project, the construction of the line to north London.

As revealed by *The Independent* yesterday, British Airways will lead a consortium that will run the Eurostar services and aim to run high-speed services from London to Paris and Brussels.

"We want to make Heathrow a transport hub," said Bob Aylung, chief executive of British Airways. "We will bring our international marketing expertise to the project."

He added: "There are a lot of people from the west of London that will use a European rail link."

The BA consortium, which saw off a bid by Richard Branson's Virgin group, also includes rail and coach operator National Express as well as the French and Belgian railways. Mr Prescott said BA's team hoped to start work on a Heathrow airport to Paris rail link in the year 2001.

The link was almost scuppered in January when London & Continental Railways (LCR), the troubled project's sponsor, discovered that Eurostar was haemorrhaging money and asked Mr Prescott to bail out LCR with a £1.2bn cash injection.

Mr Prescott rejected that option and instead sought to restructure the deal.

The new scheme will involve £140m of extra Government money, with Railtrack, the owner of the nation's track and signalling, playing a major part in the project.

In addition, ministers re-

Business, page 23

Prescott rescues Channel rail link

JOHN PRESCOTT, the Deputy Prime Minister, announced a rescue package for the much-delayed £5.4bn Channel Tunnel Rail Link yesterday with a deal that will see high-speed Eurostar services start in less than five years.

The new arrangement will mean the 68-mile London to Folkestone link will be built in two stages and will not be completed until 2007 – four years later than originally planned.

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Business, page 23

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Curbs on radio ownership may be eased

By Peter Thal Larsen

THE Government is considering plans which would lift ownership restrictions on Britain's commercial radio companies, paving the way for the creation of a new breed of media moguls.

Officials at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport are currently discussing a proposal to change the system which stops commercial radio companies from owning more than a handful of stations.

The move would free radio groups including Capital Radio, Emap - owners of the Kiss and Melody stations - and GWR, which owns Classic FM, to expand rapidly by taking over smaller stations.

A Whitehall official yesterday confirmed that Chris Smith, the Culture Secretary, would meet representatives from the commercial radio industry tomorrow to discuss the proposed changes. However, he said the Government had no immediate plans to change ownership rules.

The industry is expected to argue that ownership restrictions need to be lifted in order to allow the creation of larger companies which can fund the investment required to launch digital radio services.

Until now, radio companies have been prevented from expanding by rules which restrict the number of "points" that each group can control. Points are awarded to a radio station based on the geographical area covered by its broadcasts, but

are not related to the number of listeners it has. As a result, Xfm, an alternative London rock station which has just a few hundred thousand listeners, carries as many points as Capital FM, the capital's most popular commercial station.

The radio industry has long lobbied for the points system to be abolished, but believed that any change would require an amendment to the 1990 Broadcasting Act. However, civil servants now think that the changes could be made without the need for legislation - opening the way for restrictions to be lifted as early as next year.

The proposed changes involve awarding points to the BBC's plethora of national and local radio stations. This would massively increase the total number of points, and dilute the share of the points owned by the commercial broadcasters.

This change could be introduced by a proposal to Parliament, which would have to be passed by both Houses but would not need to be entered on to the statute book.

However, civil servants warn the proposal could be blocked by a legal hurdle because the changes require the BBC to be awarded licences by the Radio Authority - a move specifically forbidden by current legislation.

Radio operators argue that not including the BBC in calculations of the radio market is an anomaly. By comparison, the rules on television ownership which limit the share of the mar-

ket that an ITV company can control include the BBC in the calculations.

Whitehall officials are understood to be sympathetic to radio companies' problems. They also recognise that radio companies cannot wait until new legislation on media ownership is introduced, probably in the next Parliament.

The reason is that the Government is currently preparing for the introduction of digital radio, which will allow a whole host of new stations as well as added services.

The Radio Authority, the industry watchdog, has invited applications from radio companies to run the national digital licences by the end of the month. However, the cost of setting up and running the service has prompted large groups to shy away from submitting a bid.

Analysts believe that converting the existing national and local radio stations will require an investment of as much as £35m a year.



The DJ Chris Tarrant, of Capital FM. Lifting ownership restrictions on commercial radio stations could create a new breed of media mogul

Big Yin in alliance with auld enemy

SCOTTISH comedian Billy Connolly, famous for his dislike of the Scottish press, has joined forces with Scotland's *Daily Record* and Chrysalis Radio to bid for Scotland's largest radio licence, writes Paul McCann, Media Editor.

Connolly, who has had numerous altercations with reporters and photographers from the *Record* and its sister title *The Sunday Mail*, has become a partner in The Edge, a consortium bidding for a central Scotland commercial licence that has the potential to reach around half of the country's population.

The licence will cover 2.8 million people in Glasgow and Edinburgh and much of the

industrial belt in between. The Edge is bidding to provide a music station aimed at 15- to 30-year-olds that will play "indie" or non-mainstream rock and dance music.

Launching the bid, Connolly said yesterday: "This is a brilliant opportunity to make a difference. There have always been millions of reasons for not playing bands and musicians, but great people need to be heard."

The comedian, who now lives in Windsor and Los Angeles, has in the past spoken of his "hatred" of Scottish journalists and on his last tour ended up on the front page of the *Sunday Mail* for hitting one of its photographers.

IN BRIEF

CJD-variant could kill thousands, says scientist

A SCIENTIFIC team that discovered the link between mad cow disease and a new form of CJD yesterday warned that it could claim thousands of lives.

Members of the CJD Surveillance Unit admitted yesterday that they were in the dark about the effects of the new form of the disease that has already killed 25 people. Speaking at the BSE inquiry, Simon Cousens, an epidemiologist, said it was impossible to know how many deaths there would be. "At the moment it's really not possible to say whether there might be few more than a dozen or up to 100 or many thousands."

Hepatitis surgeon guilty

A SURGEON with hepatitis B was yesterday found guilty of serious professional misconduct and banned from operating for three years after fatally infecting a patient when he carried on with an operation after cutting himself with a scalpel. Sanjay Ingley was impulsive as he was barred at the General Medical Council at the end of the three day hearing. He has 28 days to appeal.

He was found guilty of taking inadequate precautions by continuing with a hip replacement operation on Blodwen Jenkins, 83, in July last year.

£1.85m for brain-damaged boy

A SURVIVING twin who suffered severe brain damage when he was starved of oxygen at birth was yesterday awarded £1.85 million by the High Court. Warren Dyer's parents Susan and Frank suffered a double tragedy when their other son, Wesley, was stillborn at King's College Hospital, south London in 1982. It was initially thought Warren was not affected, but it became clear that he had cerebral palsy causing severe physical disabilities.

Housing boom threat

NEW housing is threatening the countryside by creating a huge demand for minerals and landfill sites, according to a report published today. A study carried out by the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) concludes that residential development has deep implications for the environment which go beyond the obvious loss of greenfield sites.

£50m buys Domesday estate

THE picturesque Warter Priory Estate in East Yorkshire, which dates back to the Domesday Book, has been bought by multi-millionaire Malcolm Healey from the Marquis of Normanby for a price thought to be up to £50m.

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- Electronically controlled through Premium Fuzzy Logic
- 1000 maximum spin speed
- 6 stage spin speed selector
- 21 wash programmes
- Short wash
- Rinse hold option
- Very quiet operation
- Softline design

WOK 2001 top loader washing machine

A Wash Performance **A** Energy Efficiency

- Only 45cm wide
- Wash and shower system
- Electronically controlled through Fuzzy Logic
- 1000 maximum spin speed
- 6 stage spin speed selector
- 21 wash programmes
- Short wash
- Time delay 1-19 hours
- 13 wash programmes
- Rinse hold option
- Quiet operation
- Softline design
- 5kg capacity

WFF 1401 washing machine

A Wash Performance **B** Energy Efficiency

- Duo AquaSpa wash system
- Electronically controlled through Fuzzy Logic
- 1200 maximum spin speed
- Spin speed button for reducing spin speed
- Colour coded fascia for ease of use
- 16 wash programmes
- Rinse hold option
- Quiet operation
- Softline design

WFF 1201 washing machine

A Wash Performance **B** Energy Efficiency

- Duo AquaSpa wash system
- Electronically controlled through Fuzzy Logic
- 1000 maximum spin speed
- Spin speed button for reducing spin speed
- Colour coded fascia for ease of use
- 16 wash programmes
- Rinse hold option
- Quiet operation
- Softline design

WFP 3201 'Aqua Tech' washing machine

A Wash Performance **A** Energy Efficiency

- '3D' AquaSpa wash system (uses less water and electricity)
- AquaTech sensor for optimum rinse results
- Electronically controlled through Premium Fuzzy Logic
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- Stainless steel port hole door trim
- 22 wash programmes
- Short wash
- Time delay 1-19 hours
- Extremely quiet operation
- Remaining time indicator
- Softline design

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Taxpayers lost £1.2bn in Tory rail privatisation

By Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

THE Tory Government was so desperate to sell off part of British Rail that it accepted £1.2bn less than it originally wanted on the deal, a committee of MPs heard yesterday.

Taxpayers were the losers on the sell-off of three rolling stock leasing companies, already heavily criticised by the Comptroller and Auditor General, Sir John Bourn.

Brian Souter, executive chairman of the bus company Stagecoach, told the Public Accounts Committee that he had dropped out of the bidding after hearing that the then government wanted £1bn each for the three companies.

It eventually received £1.8bn in total for them. The purchasers then sold them on within months for a total of £2.65 billion, making multi-millionaires of some of the managers.

Mr Souter's company was one of the buyers during the second round of sales, paying £826 million for Porterbrook leasing.

He said yesterday that if he could have raised the money to bid in the first round, he would have done so.

He was put off after one of his aides rang the government's consultant on the sale, Hambros bank, to find out the price.

"Some desperately posh guy at Hambros told us they were looking for £1bn ... we simply weren't in that ballpark," he told the committee.

The government had allowed a fatal flaw to be left in the sale contracts, he said.

"If I had been handling the sale I would have put a claw-back clause, in that future profits would have been shared with taxpayers. To me that was the fundamental flaw."

Mr Souter said he believed that today, Porterbrook was worth about £1bn. However, because of investment by his company and a general rise in share prices, that did not indicate what he bought it cheap.

All three rolling stock companies were sold on, with Porterbrook going to Mr Souter's firm, Angel Trains to the Royal Bank of Scotland and Eversholt to Forward Trust.

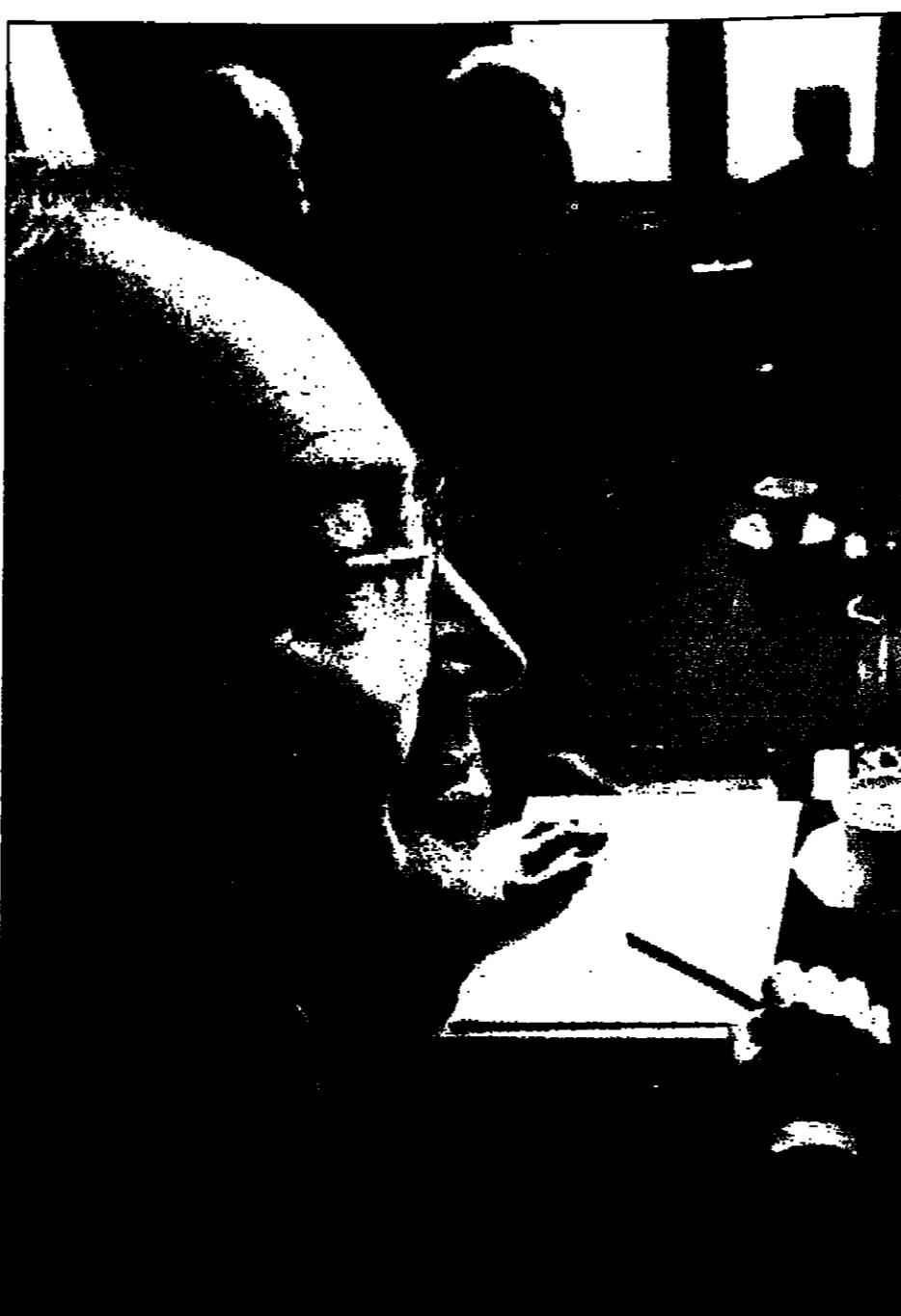
John Prideaux, who also gave evidence to the committee yesterday, made £15m from the sale of Angel Trains, while Sandy Anderson, a former BR manager, made £36m after leading the buyout of Porterbrook. Andrew Jukes made £15.9m from a stake of £110,000 in the sale of a third leasing company, Eversholt, to Forward Trust.

■ A scheme to safeguard beautiful areas of countryside was mismanaged by the government, the Public Accounts Committee said yesterday.

After 10 years, less than half the eligible farmland was in the scheme, which cost £32.5m per year.

In one case, though, 3,000 hectares of Dartmoor received grants from the Environmentally Sensitive Areas scheme even though only 2,000 hectares was eligible.

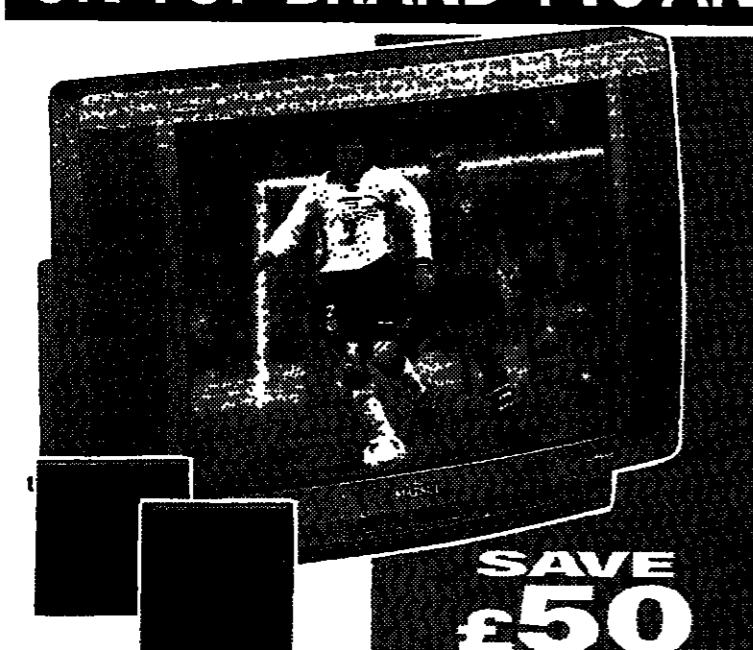
Inspectors found that farmers who received £310,000 were not complying with the scheme, but they only recovered £3,200 of the money. Administrative costs made up almost half the cost, though this had dropped recently.



Michael Howard and William Hague yesterday at the first meeting of the new Shadow Cabinet since Monday's reshuffle

Photograph: John Voce

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The school that rose again from the ashes



William Atkinson, the head teacher revitalising The Phoenix High School in west London

Photograph: John Voos

Phoenix High School shows failing schools can be turned round. By Ben Russell

ROSES bloom outside the main entrance at The Phoenix High School in west London. During mid-morning lessons yesterday a team of caretakers cleared away a few bits of litter left over from the pupils' morning break.

The corridors, all cleanly painted and carpeted, were deserted, while in a maths class on the second floor teenagers worked quietly while a teacher moved round the room offering words of help.

The classroom door bore the message "keep calm, let's work together". The walls had signs saying how the children should behave, and when they could expect work to be marked. In the gym, a group of 13-year-olds sat in rows, taking their end of term exams.

Four years ago the school was in chaos. Hammersmith School, as it was then called, had been branded the worst in Britain. The pupils were in command, hurling furniture out of windows and plastering graffiti on every surface.

A team of eight youth workers was called in just to roam the corridors trying to persuade children to stay in their classes.

Only 5 per cent of pupils left with five good GCSE passes.

Today the Phoenix is the model for the Government's Fresh Start drive to turn around failing schools.

It has a new name, a new uniform, a strict discipline code,

virtually a new staff and a head teacher praised by ministers for his remarkable work.

Hammersmith School had been classed as failing for 15 months when William Atkinson came in to give the school the first Fresh Start.

His notes from the time paint a stark picture. Exam results were "appalling".

Student attendance was "appalling"; punctuality "appalling"; the toilets "incomprehensible".

"The students are being ripped off," he wrote.

The school, which sits next to the White City council estates in west London, which have



Phoenix
High School

STRENGTH THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

laid the playground, laid carpets in the corridors and scrubbed the toilets and classrooms.

Mr Atkinson put up new signs, with the new name and a new motto, "Strength Through Knowledge".

Children arriving back went into an assembly with their burly new head teacher to hear him lay down the law. The next day, one-third of the parents turned up to hear him speak.

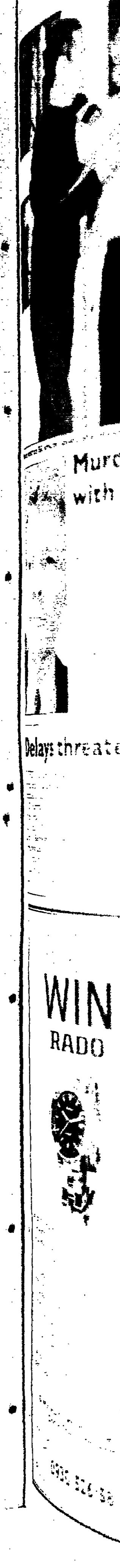
About 50 children were ex-

pelled or suspended during

that summer term, as Mr Atkinson tried to win back respect

from the children.

He insists nothing less will do. "If it does not work here, the children are going to join the underclass, and that's going to be a problem for all of us."





Police restrain Bill Jenkins (above), father of murdered Billy-Jo (right), at the trial of Sion Jenkins (left). Photograph: Nigel Bowles

Murder trial opens with fight at court

THE father of murdered teenager Billie-Jo Jenkins lashed out at the girl's foster father as he appeared at court yesterday to face trial for her killing, writes Louise Jury.

Bill Jenkins spat at Sion Jenkins, shouted abuse and tried to attack him outside Lewes Crown Court, East Sussex.

The dead girl's natural father had to be held back to prevent him reaching Sion Jenkins, who was rushed into the building by minders.

Sion Jenkins, 41, is charged with murdering 13-year-old Billie-Jo on 15 February last year.

She was found bludgeoned to death on the patio of her foster family's home in Hastings. She had been fostered by Sion Jenkins and his wife Lois for four years.

Sion Jenkins was deputy headteacher of William Parker Boys' School in Hastings until he was suspended as the result of the criminal investigation.

Billie-Jo's natural mother, Debbie Woods, who is estranged from Billie-Jo's father, was also in court yesterday to watch legal argument in advance of the trial, which is expected to start today.



Delays threaten pledge on offenders

COURTS are taking more than four months to deal with young criminals, threatening to derail the Government's pledge to cut the time to 71 days by the next General Election, writes Jason Bennetto, Crime Correspondent.

In some parts of the country the process is taking as much as seven months, ac-

cording to a report by the Audit Commission.

Local authorities are failing to introduce schemes to prevent re-offending while more than £70m is being wasted in the course of processing young criminals.

The study by the spending watchdog suggests Labour has

much to do if it is to meet its elec-

tion promise of tackling long delays in dealing with persistent young offenders aged 10 to 17.

The Home Office has about three years to meet its 71-day target for dealing with a young offender from the point of arrest to sentencing.

A survey of 120 local auth-

orities during 1997 found it took, on average, 131 days to

process offenders in youth courts. "Such a long delay means that a young person caught for breaking into a car, say, at the end of February, does not know his punishment until midsummer," says the report.

"It can be difficult for a

teenager to make the link be-

tween cause and effect over

such a long period."

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Manchester's violent crime rate soars

By Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

VIOLENT crimes have risen by 50 per cent and rapes by a third in the past year in Greater Manchester, the country's second largest police force area.

Police figures revealed yesterday that there were also big increases in the incidence of muggings, serious woundings, sex attacks and assaults, adding to the city's reputation as a hotbed of violence and gang warfare.

The number of murders in Greater Manchester went up from 35 to 43 and the number of violent offences rose by 5,600 to about 17,000 in the year ending May 1998.

David Wilmot, the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police, was criticised by the Manchester City Council leader, Richard Leese, earlier this year over what Mr Leese claimed was police inaction

against "rampant lawlessness" overtaking the city's thriving clubland. The council leader said crime was undermining the confidence of potential investors in the city.

He said police officers seemed "either unable or willing" to tackle problems caused by thugs and gangsters in pubs and nightclubs.

Mr Wilmot is expected to argue later in the week that some of the recent increases in recorded crime are due to different counting methods adopted by the Manchester force last Christmas.

Although the number of violent crimes recorded in England and Wales has increased every year for the past decade - a 1.7 per cent increase in 1997 - the scale of the increase in Greater Manchester is shocking.

Serious woundings increased by 17 per cent to 1,800, while less grave injuries and assaults soared by 56 per

cent to 14,700. Street robberies increased by nearly 12 per cent to 4,300, but less than one in seven of them were detected.

Rapes in the region rose by a third to 468. The more general category of sex offences, which includes indecent assault, went up by a quarter to 1,800.

A survey earlier in the year by *The Independent* also found that Greater Manchester had the highest homicide level of all police forces in England and Wales in 1996.

The North-west England region has struggled to shed its violent image following a series of drug related shootings and attacks during the 1990s.

In January 1996, a man was saved by his body armour after he was shot at 27 times during a street attack in the city's Moss Side area during "tit for tat" gang violence.

Mr Wilmot will present the new figures to the Manchester

force's police authority in what is expected to be a stormy annual meeting on Friday.

Overall, the number of recorded crimes rose by 1.9 per cent to nearly 300,000.

But the total number of crimes in England and Wales as a whole dropped by nearly nine per cent last year - the fifth consecutive decrease.

The only successes for Manchester were a 12 per cent drop in domestic burglaries and an 8 per cent decrease in car crime. The two categories make up about half of all offences. Firearms offences were also down, by almost 10 per cent.

Greater Manchester Police yesterday refused to comment until the figures are officially released on Friday.

Figures released this week by Scotland Yard show that violent crimes in the capital have risen by six per cent, while overall offences have gone down by five per cent.

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Ulster prisoner releases: Prime Minister's claim that Mo Mowlam is reviewing guardsmen's cases catches Whitehall by surprise

Blair raises hope of early freedom for jailed soldiers

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

TONY BLAIR yesterday raised hopes that two Scots Guardsmen serving life sentences for the shooting of a teenager in Northern Ireland could soon be freed from prison.

But the Prime Minister caught the Northern Ireland Office by surprise when he told MPs that the cases of James Fisher and Mark Wright were being reviewed by Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. "We are trying to get to the bottom of it," said one Whitehall source.

Fisher, 28, from Ayr, and Wright, 24, from Arbroath, were jailed for killing an 18-year-old Catholic man while on active duty. Their release might be seen as a move to buy off Conservative MPs opposed to the release of IRA terrorist prisoners.

Tory sources last night denied that there had been any backroom deal with Ms Mowlam when she met members of the Shadow Cabinet sub-committee on Northern Ireland on Monday to reassure them about the legislation on prisoner releases.

William Hague, who chairs the committee, told Mr Blair that their release was a "matter of urgency". Last night he was writing to Ms Mowlam to seek clarification. "We thought that, until today, she had ruled out any early review of their case. The Prime Minister seems to have changed his mind," said a Conservative Party source.

Andrew Mackay, the Tory spokesman on Ulster, said: "We hope that this is a step in the right direction. The Prime Minister's response was more positive than that I received from the Northern Ireland Secretary when I raised the issue a few weeks ago." The campaign for the soldiers' release was stepped up after it became clear that terrorist prisoners could be released under the Northern Ireland peace deal. The Government faced criticism that the soldiers were being denied early release while terrorists were being freed.

Mr Blair told the Commons at question time that Ms Mowlam had been unable to examine the cases prior to a court case on 22 May. "Before this court case was concluded, Ms Mowlam was not able to conduct her own review. Now that is out of the way, she will do that as quickly as possible."

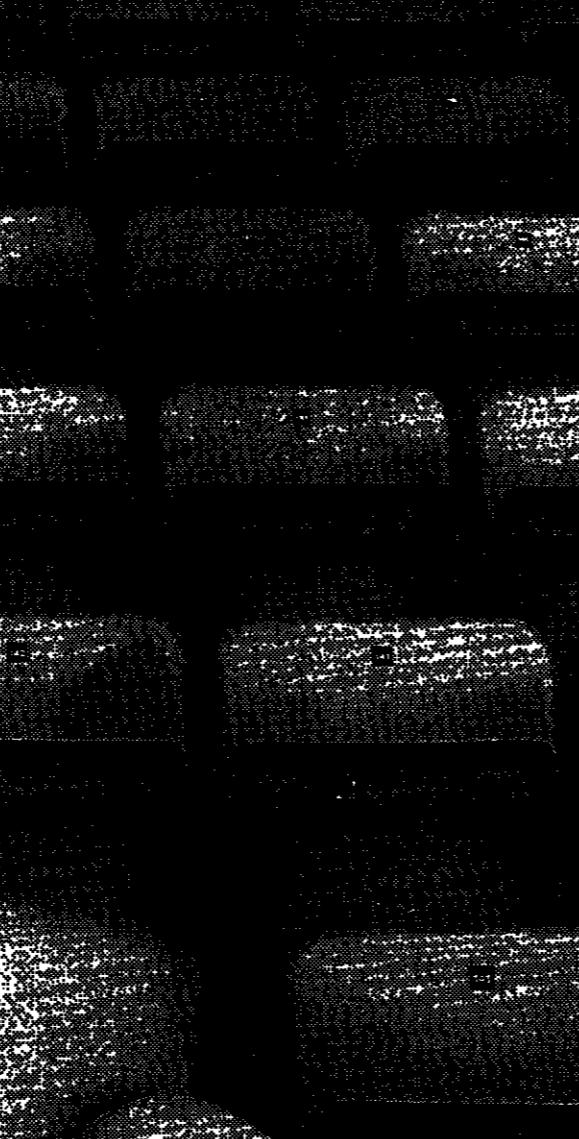
Later, General Murray Nayler, a spokesman for the Release Group campaigning for the two men, welcomed Mr Blair's interest in their plight. "We are delighted that the Prime Minister has responded to the growing pressure for the release of Fisher and Wright by promising an early review of their cases."

The guardsmen had been seeking a judicial review of Ms Mowlam's refusal to refer their cases immediately to the Life Sentences Review Board. But Mr Justice Coghlin said that there were insufficient grounds for quashing her decision.

Ms Mowlam had indicated that their cases would be open to review under the normal procedures in October. On 13 May, John Reid, the Armed Forces minister, gave no hint of any early review after he met the Release Group. He said he was concerned at the plight of the guardsmen but said the decisions would be "taken as a re-

sult of the due process of law". Tomorrow the Northern Ireland Office will publish the legislation to implement the release of prisoners and Mr Blair gave renewed assurances to MPs that it would contain the conditions laid out in his speech in Belfast, Northern Ireland, during the referendum "yes" campaign. Ministers have been seeking to persuade the Tories and Ulster Unionists that their fears will be dealt with in the legislation.

Mo Mowlam and the Prince of Wales mingle with guests at a garden party at Hillsborough Castle yesterday attended by politicians and victims of violence



Ulster policing group members named

By David McKittrick
Ireland Correspondent

THE Government yesterday announced the membership of the new commission on Northern Ireland's future policing, following a delay to allow last-minute negotiations with Dublin.

The Irish government is believed to have had misgivings about the originally proposed make-up of the body, which is to review policing requirements and structures.

The policing issue is alive with political sensitivities, given that the views of local parties range from the Sinn Fein demand for the RUC's disbandment to the highly protective attitudes of Unionist groupings towards the force.

The assumption is that, if the ceasars of the major paramilitary groups hold, the size of the force will be considerably reduced. At the moment it consists of 8,500 regular members, 3,000 full-time reservists and 1,400 part-time reservists.

Nationalists and republicans yesterday turned down an invitation to discuss the future of policing with the Northern Ireland Police Authority whose chairman, Pat Armstrong, said:

"The policing debate has suffered too long from negativity with sterile and polarised arguments. We need more enlightened discussion." The nationalist groupings made clear they intended to deal instead with the commission, describing the Authority as irrelevant.

In its annual report, the Authority recommended leaving much of the RUC's established identity intact, including its name, uniform and emblem. It added, however, that it would be pressing for legislation compelling RUC officers to declare membership of groups such as the Freemasons and the Orange Order.

On the issue of plastic bullets, it said it had concluded with some reluctance that there was no effective substitute for the weapons in large-scale disturbances.

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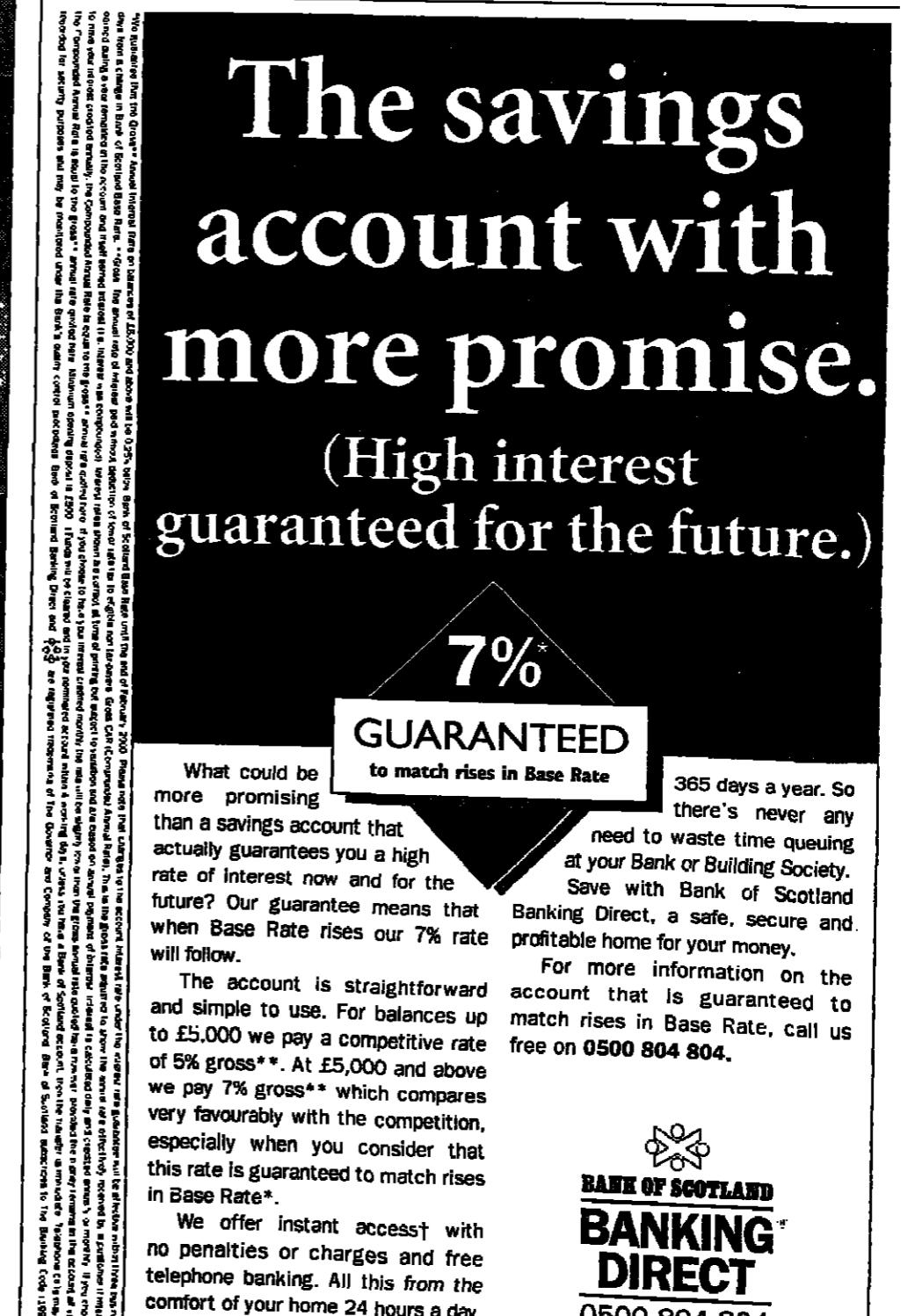
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Girls' sex abuser moves back into their street

By Roger Dobson

A CONVICTED child sex abuser who was banned from living in the same street as his young victims while he was on bail has moved back after being found guilty and released from jail.

The parents of the victims – who say the two girls, aged seven and eight, are at risk of seeing their abuser every day – are now planning civil legal action to have the youth removed.

Anti-paedophile campaigners say the case highlights an anomaly in the law in which it was possible to ban the abuser from living in the North Wales village before he was found guilty, and yet impossible to keep him away once he had been convicted and freed.

Lawyers are now attempting to find a way of taking civil action against the abuser on the grounds that he is causing a nuisance or harassment to the families by being there.

A 30-year-old man who warned people in the village about the offender in a leaflet campaign has been charged by the police with harassment.

He said: "This youth came to live in a house directly opposite the home of one of the girls, and four doors away from the other. The

families were so shocked they did not know what to do and asked me for advice. We all thought that everyone here needed to be aware of what was happening and I wanted to alert people to the dangers."

"I and many other people find it crazy that I can be charged with causing distress to a child sex offender when the children he abused are forced to live opposite him. In my view, by simply being there, he is harassing those children."

The 16-year-old abuser was sentenced to four months in jail last year after being found guilty of two charges of gross indecency, and two of indecent assaults involving the two girls.

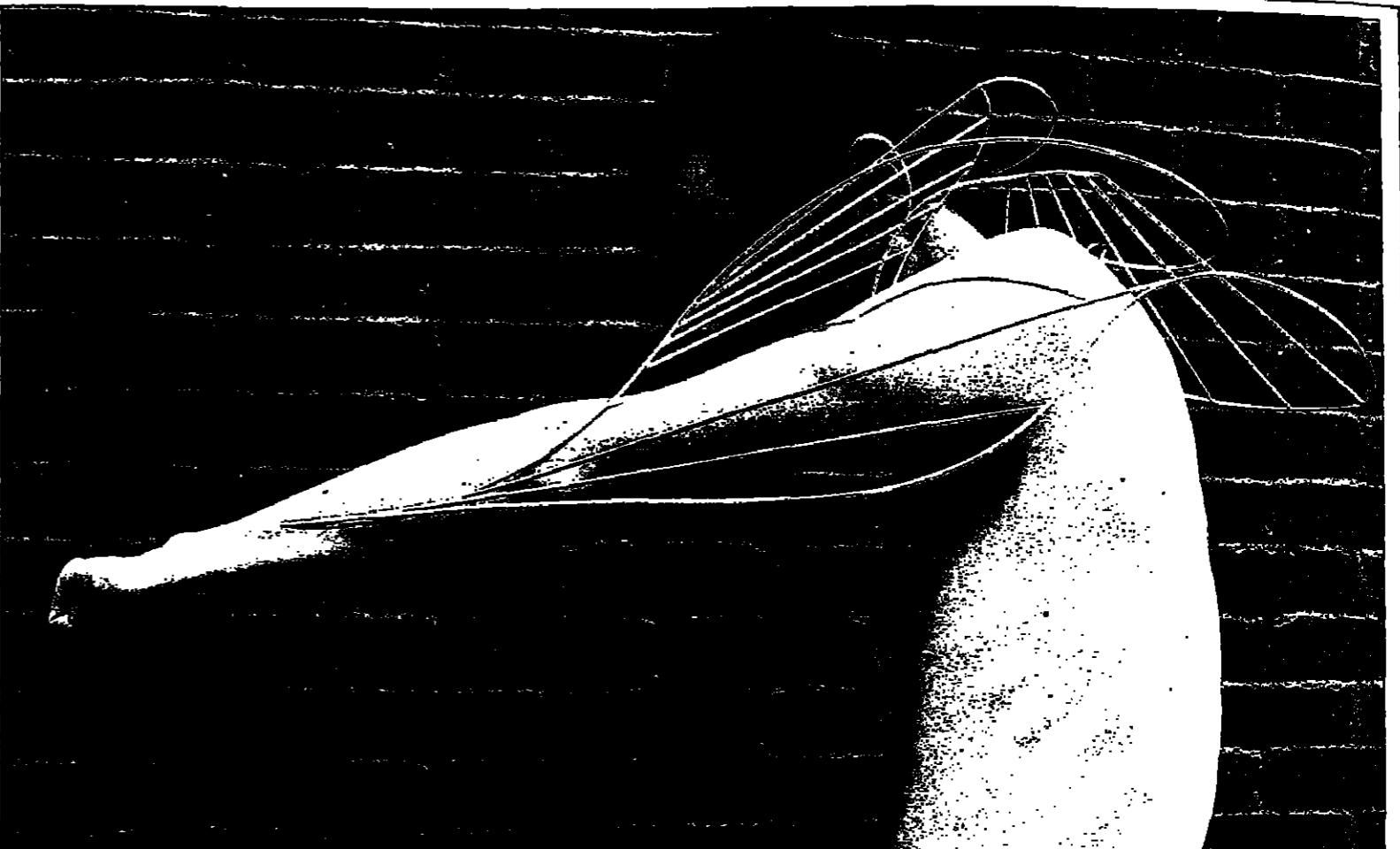
"There is no control over where he resides, although they could and did restrict his residence while he was on bail and still unconvicted," said a solicitor representing one of the families. "We are now looking for a civil remedy because of the problems the girls have with the offender living opposite them. It is a very awkward situation for them and their parents to be in."

"The problem is that we cannot find any precedent for what we want to happen. We are looking at the possibility of having an injunction for a continuing nuisance in that he is offending the injured party just by

his presence and that he should move."

Leading child law specialist, Allan Levy QC, said yesterday: "I think that under the law as it stands, unless there is a threat of violence or actual harassment then there isn't an obvious remedy for people in this situation. There obviously are issues of personal liberty involved too when you have the right to remain in property."

A Home Office spokesman said: "People cannot be forced to move address after they have served their sentence. The new Crime and Disorder Bill is introducing extensive supervision which will include people whose sentences are under one year."



Jacky Oliver's body jewellery, titled Flash Gordon, is in the Royal College of Art's Fine and Applied Art Show, which opens today. Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Water firms' service goes down the drain

By Glenda Cooper
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

THE privatised water companies are not providing value for money or spending customers' money well, a survey says today.

Although most of the 1,000 people questioned said that they were happy with the services they received, three out of five thought that they were getting less value for money than they were five years ago.

Nearly half of all consumers have not recognised any improvements in service in the last few years and 70 per cent think shareholders have benefited more than customers from privatisation.

Since privatisation of the water industry in 1989, water and sewerage prices have increased by almost 40 per cent in real terms – a higher percentage than other privatised utilities.

Water companies have faced repeated criticism over giving their shareholders large dividends instead of spending money on improving the service.

One of the biggest areas of dissatisfaction uncovered by the Consumers' Association Which? report was water restrictions such as hosepipe bans which 70 per cent of people blamed on company leaks.

Consumers in the North West, Severn Trent, Southern, South West Water and Yorkshire

areas were the most likely to have experienced these.

Nearly a third of respondents believed that water companies have not done enough to keep public areas of water clean and almost a third felt their water company did not keep them informed, with customers of North West Water feeling particularly left in the dark.

However, 80 per cent of consumers are satisfied with the safety and appearance of their water, and 66 per cent say their water had either always tasted good or had improved.

Customers of South West Water, which has the highest water bills in the country – an average of £355 unmetered – were the least happy, complaining about overall service, value for money and environmental policies.

Thames Water customers, whose average bill is the lowest at £200, also reported areas of dissatisfaction, along with Anglian Water households who pay an average of £325. Northumbrian water customers, paying an average of £235 a year, were the happiest in the survey of 1,000 people, scoring the highest ratings.

Helen Parker, editor of Which?, said the survey showed widespread customer dissatisfaction. She called on the regulator Ofwat to introduce a one-off price cut for households.

DAILY POEM

Rock Music

By Les Murray

Sex is a Nazi. The students all knew this at your school. To it, everyone's subhuman for parts of their lives. Some are all their lives. You'll be one of those if these things worry you.

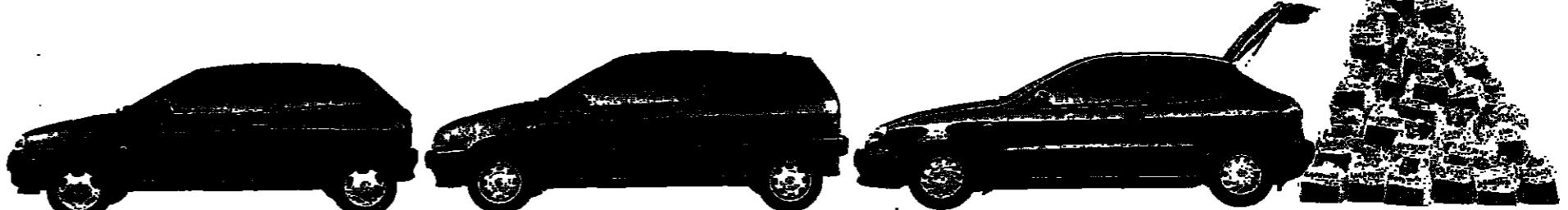
The beautiful Nazis, why are they so cruel? Why, to castrate the aberrant, the original, the wounded who might change our species and make obsolete the true race. Which is those who never leave school.

For the truth, we are silent. For the flattering dream, in mused faring reassurance, we spasm and scream, but what is a Nazi but sex pushed for crowds?

It's the Calvin SS: you are what you've got and you'll wrinkle and fawn and work after you're shot, though tears pour in secret from the hot indoor clouds.

Our poems this week celebrate the publication of Les Murray's *Collected Poems* by Carcanet Press (£12.95). Born on a New South Wales farm in 1938, Les Murray has been a full-time writer since 1971; in 1996, he won the TS Eliot Prize. This poem first appeared in *Subhuman Redneck Poems* (1996).

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- 6) Power steering.
- 7) Central locking.

Prices correct at 2nd June 1998. The Lanos range includes 3, 4 and 5 door models with prices from £8,820 to £11,220.

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'The car lay on the track as the train came.'

By Marcus Tanner

THE SKIES were blue and it was fine spring day when Germany's worst railway disaster since the Second World War took place.

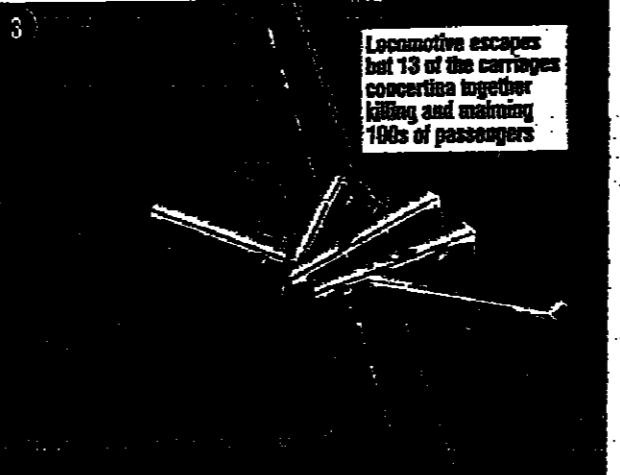
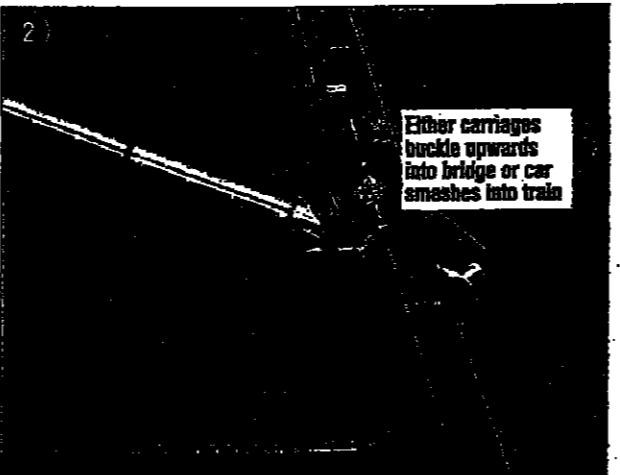
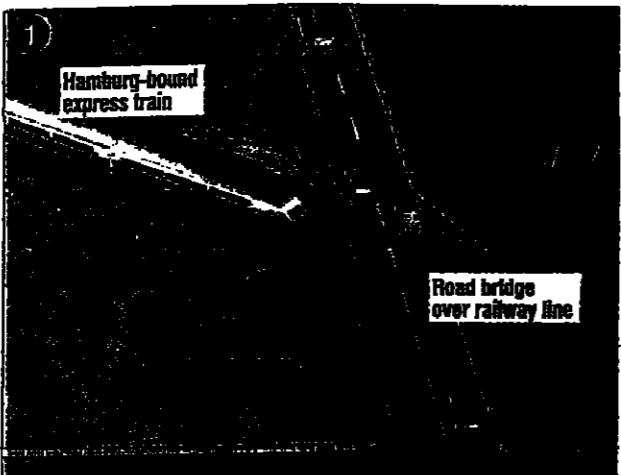
It was 11 in the morning. The sleek white Munich-Hamburg express, comprising 13 carriages and carrying between 350 and 400 passengers, was speeding along at 125 miles an hour, approaching the station in Eschede, 35 miles north of Hanover in northern Germany.

The train was more than four-fifths of the way towards its destination. The 600-mile journey normally takes five hours and 37 minutes.

Just before reaching the station at Eschede, the train approached a small bridge, about 30 metres wide, carrying a country road across the railway track.

There are two explanations for what happened as the train passed under that bridge.

One is that the Inter City Ex-



press jumped off the tracks after hitting a car, which had crashed through the railings on the bridge over the railway tracks and plunged on to the track, hitting the train.

A second explanation is that the train hit the bridge, and this made a car which had been parked on the bridge crash through the railings and fall on to the tracks.

A British eyewitness, An-

drew Davidson, said that the first explanation coincided with what he had seen. He was stopped while approaching the bridge by the German police, who told him there had been an accident with a car coming off the bridge.

"The car was on its side on the tracks," he said. "Then, out of nowhere, came the express train and everyone just closed their eyes in disbelief. The

train had no chance to stop. There was just an almighty great crash that seemed to go on for eternity."

Police confirmed that a car, which was the property of a railway employee working on track repair, had been found, crushed, beneath the wreckage.

However, it was unclear where the car had been parked at the time of the accident.

An additional mystery was

the extent to which a reported safety failing in the prestigious high-speed train was responsible for the accident.

According to the driver of the train, who survived the disaster, the locomotive became uncoupled from the carriages just before they jumped off the tails.

Klaus Rathert, a German regional official from Lower Saxony, confirmed reports to a

news conference that the front locomotive had apparently decoupled from the passenger cars, saying this made them derail and crash into the bridge.

The train driver told officials he realised he had lost control over the passenger carriages when the train jerked and a brake signal came on.

One of the passengers, Wolf-Rüdiger Schlieben, confirmed that two minutes before

the accident he had heard "a tremendous rattling and shaking" in the train.

Last night the German authorities had still not agreed absolutely on what happened.

The interior ministry of Lower Saxony said it believed that a car did, in fact, fall over the side of the the overpass, derailing the train. But the German railway authorities were not able to confirm the cause of the disaster.

the passengers who were trapped under tons of concrete.

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Safe and fast across Europe

By Randep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

THE Inter City Express train is considered to be the safest train in Germany and part of a fleet of 104 aerodynamic hi-tech trains that can travel at speeds of up to 175mph.

Until yesterday's tragedy, the ICE had an impeccable safety record. The high speed train, introduced in 1991, can carry up to 760 passengers in 14 sound-proofed carriages behind their 13,000 horse-power locomotives.

"There had been no accidents in which passengers were hurt or killed before Wednesday's fatal crash," said Hartmut Sommer, a spokesman for German Railways. "The train is considered to be the safest in Germany."

The distinctive white trains, which have travelled at up to 250mph in tests, use dedicated track to travel on.

Rail travel has made a huge impact on the continent. The tentacles of a high-speed network have already spread across Europe, shrinking the distances between cities.

Spain's AVE trains rarely drop below 130mph and cover the 300 miles between Madrid and Seville in just over two hours. France's TGV race around the country at 185mph

- matching the much-vaunted Eurostar's top speed. By 2005, Germany plans to have a "maglev" train zipping along at 250mph on a cushion of air between Hamburg and Berlin.

High-speed trains have dramatically cut travel times and lured travellers away from aeroplanes and roads. In Germany, rail travel is up 35 per cent while air's market share has dropped 10 per cent on competing routes since the ICE was introduced.

The ICE only needs five hours and 40 minutes to travel the 823km between Hamburg and Munich, the journey undertaken by the train before it crashed.

The 18m trains cater for almost every luxury. All seats in the ICES have headphones providing music and some have video screens. Passengers can make and receive telephone calls or use computerised information terminals in each carriage. The trains are also equipped with a conference centre, restaurant and bar.

Given the apparent cause of the accident, it is unlikely that many will question the safety of the ICES. Not a single person has died in an accident on the Japanese shinkansen bullet train - which first started running in 1964.

WHO SHOULD THEY FEAR AT FRANCE '98



Andy Adams of Arsenal & England
"I don't fear anybody. I respect all the great strikers, Ronaldo etc, but there is not one player in the World Cup I fear".

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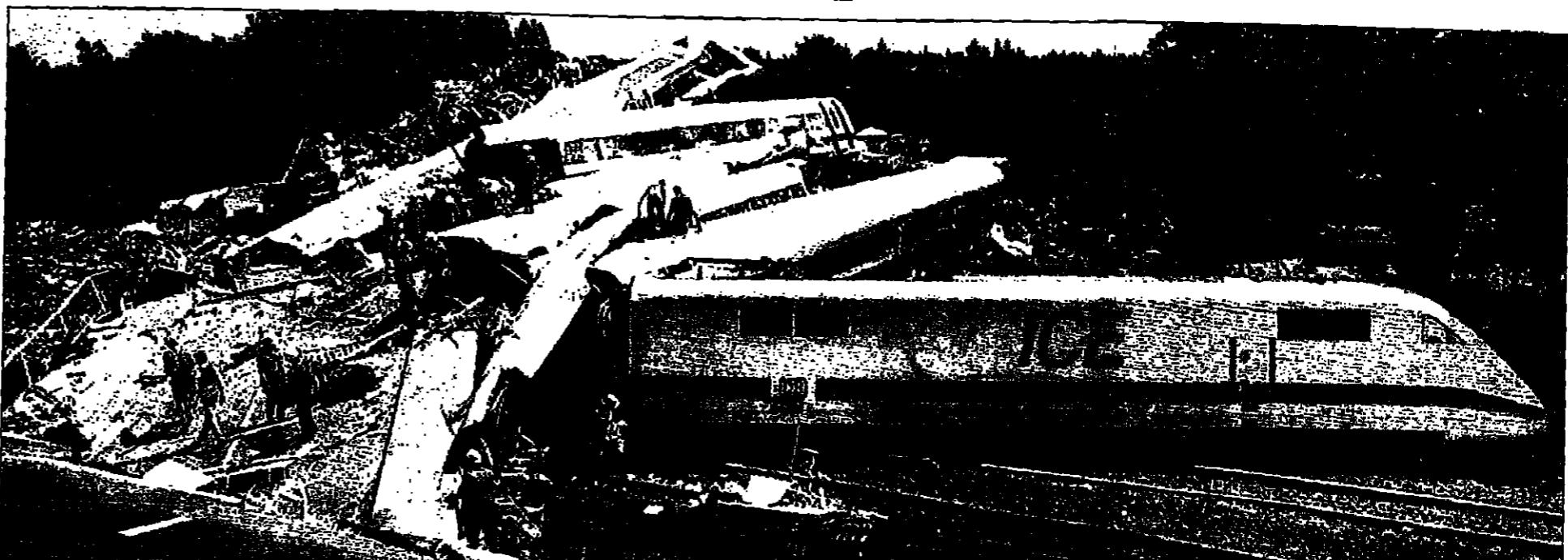
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Everyone just closed their eyes in disbelief'



The German Inter City Express lying crumpled near the bridge outside Eschede, near Hanover. Some coaches are a jumbled mass of metal, others point to the sky. Rescue workers, left, were hoping to find survivors. Photographs: AP, AFP, Reuters

fast
Europe

Worst crash for 30 years

THE train crash that killed about 70 people and injured around 300 yesterday is the worst in Germany for more than three decades.
1992 - Ten people were killed after a passenger train smashed into a derailed freight wagon.
1989 - Gas blast causes USSR's worst rail disaster, killing 800.
1988 - Britain's worst rail disaster: 35 people die at Clapham when trains collide.
1986 - 150 people killed in Portugal rail disaster.
1985 - More than 20 killed as train crashes into bus in Israel.

Randeep Ramesh

Silent carnage among the wild roses

By Dieter Osterman, in Eschede
Joachim Wille, in Frankfurt and
Karsten Pflog, in Hamburg

SEEN from below, the bridge close to Eschede station, where wild roses are in bloom on the approach road, looks unspectacular. Only in one place do the remains of an Inter-City Express (ICE) coach protrude - hollow and ghostly - into the air.

Torn by the force of the impact, the connecting passage at the end of the carriage stretches skywards like a gaping mouth - as though the silver-grey compartment had uttered a death cry, when one coach, travelling at around 125mph, rammed straight under the previous coach, which had smashed into the bridge.

Several coaches lie wedged over and into each other. Together, they are less than 20 metres long - but piled up almost as high. Only the tip of the flattened final coach, with the red "ICE" logo, which came to a

halt before smashing into the ruins, retains its own shape.

"The bridge just broke through," said Manfred Theil, who arrived on the spot with the first ambulances. "It was pure chaos, with dead and injured lying everywhere. I've never seen

.....
"It was pure
chaos, with the
dead lying
everywhere"

anything like it." There are dozens of ambulances, and helicopters circle overhead. Among the medical helpers and television cameras, seven black limousines wait patiently. They are the undertakers' cars from the nearest town.

A crane is supposed to lift those parts of the bridge which have buried two carriages un-

der them. Nobody knows what they will find there.

Wolfgang Arndt, a hospital doctor, was in the operating theatre when the alarm was sounded. In a nearby gymnasium hall, he stares with empty eyes into his coffee.

He says there is no com-

parison with a motorway pile-up. "There's a quite different force behind it. It is not comparable." A nurse points out:

"When one imagines that this is just the mild version, you feel queasy. After all, the train ran into a stationary object, not into a train coming from the opposite direction."

Exactly what happened is still impossible to say. The regional spokesman for German Railways repeats the same message again and again: that the Munich-Hamburg train must have rammed the bridge pillar beside the rails when it shot through Eschede station with 13 coaches at a speed of around 125mph. The duty manager at the near-

by station saw the lone locomotive "just driving past" - and immediately put on the stop signal for all other trains. Only three second-class coaches passed under the bridge, and were derailed with relatively little damage. Two further coaches lie under the collapsed bridge. The remaining coaches had come to a standstill in front of it.

The spokesman shrugs his shoulders helplessly, when asked why the train became separated from the locomotive.

"Why the ICE touched the bridge, after going through here every day and always remaining unscathed, I don't want to speculate." The train driver survived, but was in shock. He knew nothing of the car which was said to have fallen from the bridge on to the rails.

In the Frankfurt headquarters of Deutsche Bahn railways, they are equally hesitant to give the causes of the accident. "As long as we don't know

the exact cause of the accident, it makes no sense to speculate on the safety systems of the ICE," spokesman Hartmut Sommer said. The system had been checked by the appropriate federal institute; there had been no previous problems.

.....
"Seven black
undertakers'
limousines wait
patiently"

Despite the accidents, and even if the grisly events at Eschede seem to contradict it: the statistics show that rail traffic is still the safest way to move. In the seven years since the beginning of the ICE age, there had until yesterday been no serious accident with the super-train - only a death on a building site, and a collision in

a repair workshop. Since 1991, 130 million passengers have been carried in the ICE trains.

The spokesman for the VCD, an organisation promoting alternative forms of transport, was by chance in Bonn yesterday, pressing for a change in ways of travelling - with the support of the railways.

"One travels in the train as safely as in the lap of Abraham," said Burkhard Reinhardt. The friends and relatives at Hamburg main station believed the same, as they stood waiting for the Munich train. Many of them probably only heard the news when they went home.

The arrivals board at the station initially merely declared a two-hour delay - because of "operational difficulties". Only after an hour and a half was it finally announced that the train expected at platform 12 would never arrive.

The authors are correspondents for the German daily newspaper *Frankfurter Rundschau*.

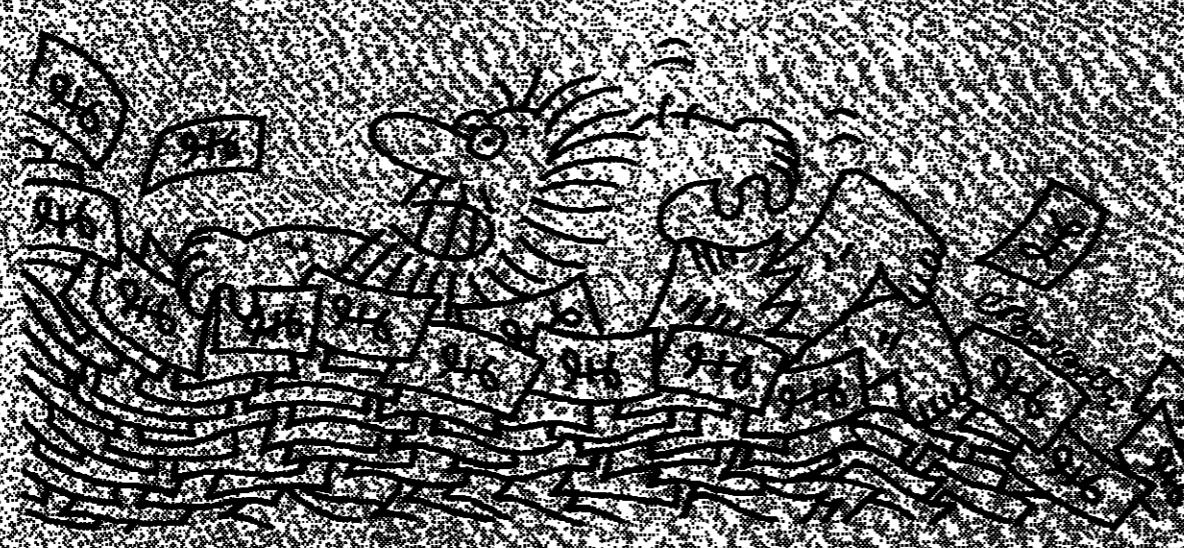
British soldiers on hand

A BRITISH soldier who led a unit of troops to help rescue victims of the German rail disaster in which scores of people died, spoke last night of the "absolute devastation".

Colour Sergeant Phil Forsyth, 32, from Newcastle, and 20 soldiers from the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers, based at Celle in Germany, were among the first to arrive at the site.

Sgt Forsyth, speaking from the regiment's base just minutes away said: "An horrific sight met us. Some five or six carriages were piled up on top of each other. It was completely silent. Nobody could have walked away from that. I fear the death toll will be very high."

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Hong Kong to defy China and honour Tiananmen victims

Stephen Vines
Hong Kong

ENS OF thousands of Hong Kong people are expected to take part in a mass act of defiance tonight by turning out to commemorate the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. On the Chinese mainland, any attempt to mark the event would be quickly crushed.

Before the handover of Hong Kong to Chinese rule, Fan Qichen, the minister previously responsible for Hong Kong affairs, made it clear rallies of this kind would not be tolerated under the new order.

However, the rally has not been banned, and manifested efforts to deny the organisers a voice have come to nothing. A government official who declined to be named said: "What do you expect us to do? We don't want a confrontation over Tiananmen. We know this is something which is extremely sensitive."

The official line, frequently expressed by Tung Chee-hwa, Hong Kong's chief executive, is that people should stop looking back and focus on the future. The massacre, referred to as the "Tiananmen incident" in official jargon, is viewed as a hiccup which had nothing to do with Hong Kong's present circumstances.

On Tuesday, local councillors

rejected an application to allow the permanent display of a statue called the Pillar of Shame, which commemorates the massacre. Wu Suk-ching, one of the government appointed councillors, argued that "this incident happened in Peking and we don't need to focus too much on events happening in Peking".

This view is not shared by Cheng Yiu-tong, one of the rally organisers, who said: "Now we are under Chinese rule it is a lot more meaningful for Hong Kong people to fight for democracy in China."

In the recent elections for the Hong Kong legislature, candidates supporting the democracy movement won two-thirds of the popular vote. The main pro-China party was put on the defensive in the campaign, when its leaders tried to deny they supported the Tiananmen massacre, in which hundreds were killed.

Though the authorities will not admit it, they are well aware feelings about the massacre are still running high. The admission is shown by the kid-glove handling of demonstrations of support for China's democracy movement. Last Sunday, a pre-commemoration rally was allowed in the centre of town.

A handful of well-known Chinese dissidents, who would



Chinese soldiers on duty yesterday in Tiananmen Square. Security has been stepped up for today's anniversary of the 1989 massacre. Photograph: AP

face arrest on the mainland, are allowed to remain in Hong Kong and conduct propaganda activities. The Pillar of Shame statue has been displayed in all of Hong Kong's universities.

Moreover, the local media, which was restrained in reporting the massacre at the time, has since become bolder,

on local activities in support of the democracy movement.

Even the People's Liberation Army, whose presence in Hong Kong was a matter of concern before the handover, has remained resolutely low-key.

The authorities in Peking clearly have ordered their representatives in Hong Kong to

leave the limelight to the administration of Tung Chee-hwa. He receives head-of-state treatment when in China and appears directly under the wing of President Jiang Zemin.

China trusts Mr Tung, confident that his conservative, authoritarian views do not conflict with their own. In practice this means Hong Kong has a certain leeway in tolerating protests.

But there are limits. The new legislature, which has a pro-government majority owing to the way the election system was rigged, is expected to pass a new law on sedition and subversion which threatens to make anti-Chinese protests illegal.

JAILED OFFICIAL SPEAKS OUT

THE MOST senior Chinese official jailed after the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre has spoken publicly for the first time since his release, calling for controls on the power of the Communist Party, writes Teresa Poole.

In a warning which will embarrass China's leaders, Bao Tong said: "If there are no controls on a power, internally it could be unpredictable and internationally it could also be unpredictable." He added that the brutal 4 June army crackdown could have been avoided had there been controls on the Communist Party.

Mr Bao's comments were made on the eve of today's ninth anniversary of the shootings in which hundreds of unarmed pro-democracy demonstrators were killed. About 20 dissidents have been detained in the past two weeks ahead of the anniversary. This year, the government is particularly anxious that the date should pass without public protest on the mainland because President Bill Clinton is due to make his first state visit to China in just three weeks' time.

Mr Bao was the most senior party insider to face trial and imprisonment after 1989. He was jailed for seven years after being found guilty of leaking state secrets — warning the students in May 1989 that martial law was being imposed — and not released until May 1996.

Packer closes in on rival's golden assets

Robert Milliken
in Sydney

AS A compulsive gambler, Kerry Packer is not easily rebuffed. In casinos and on racecourses from London to Las Vegas and Sydney, Australia's richest tycoon has won and lost millions.

Now the man that Paul Barry, his unofficial biographer, describes as "vast, superhuman, angry and unstoppable", is raising the stakes once again over control of John Fairfax Holdings, Australia's richest and most influential newspaper group.

The Fairfax newspapers have eluded Mr Packer for years. They are known as the "livers of gold" because of the fortunes their two flagships, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*, of Melbourne, generate from classified advertising.

Mr Packer's designs on Fairfax have been frustrated up to now by laws that bar the same person owning newspapers and television channels in the same city. He owns Channel Nine, Australia's richest commercial television network.

But recent upheavals at Fairfax have sent shockwaves through Australia's newspaper business and left people asking if Kerry Packer is about to rash through its group's gates.

The drama began on 18 May when Brian Powers, an American-born businessman and Mr Packer's closest lieutenant, resigned as chief executive of both the Packer private company and the public company that owns Channel Nine. Mr Powers has in effect run the Packer empire for the past five years.

Within hours he was invited to join the Fairfax board, and did so. Eleven days later, on 29 May, Mr Powers was elevated to chairman of the board. He replaced a chairman appointed by Brierley Investments, a New



The two Fairfax titles, top, that could be targets for Kerry Packer, left, or Lachlan Murdoch

Zealand company that has controlled Fairfax since it bought a 24 per cent stake in late 1996 from Conrad Black, the Canadian proprietor of *The Daily Telegraph*.

Brierley's move to relinquish the Fairfax chairmanship so swiftly has been widely interpreted as meaning that the New Zealand company has lost control of Fairfax. But to whom?

Mr Powers joined Fairfax as the representative of a trust controlled by Packer interests that holds almost 15 per cent of Fairfax shares. This is the maximum holding Mr Packer is allowed under the cross-media ownership law. Is Mr Powers a stalking horse for Kerry Packer? It may look that way.

But Mr Powers has the support of two other Fairfax directors and of institutional shareholders who are dismayed by Fairfax's recent performance. Over the past year, the company has invested heavily in its

newspapers to keep ahead of Rupert Murdoch, who controls two-thirds of Australia's metropolitan newspaper market.

Fairfax's costs soared by 11 per cent, 10 times the inflation rate. The returns did not always match.

In Melbourne, readers have not responded to a re-design of *The Age*, whose circulation has fallen below the critical figure of 200,000 on some days.

Sensing his rival's weakness, Mr Murdoch in late April launched a price war in Melbourne, cutting by half the cover price of *The Australian*, his national broadsheet daily. The move has soaked up some Fairfax readers.

Bob Muscat, Fairfax's chief executive, flew to Melbourne for crisis talks over *The Age*. Then, within days of Mr Powers' arrival at the company, Mr Muscat shook the Sydney newsroom by sacking John Alexander, editor-in-chief and publisher of *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

Mr Alexander, one of Fairfax's most powerful figures, had been credited with boosting the prestigious Sydney paper's circulation. But he also spent lavishly on staff, buying up journalists simply to keep them out of the clutches of Murdoch and other Fairfax papers, and he recently resisted moves to abolish some overseas postings.

Mr Alexander's demise is seen as a harbinger of heavy cost-cutting. Murdoch newspapers have suggested that up to 100 Fairfax journalists could be for the chop.

Kerry Packer would not mind a bit. For a man whose roots in newspapers go back to his grandfather, the legendary Sydney press proprietor R.C. Packer, he has a low opinion of journalists. Over the years Mr Packer has become convinced that journalists, particularly Fairfax journalists, have been out to "get" him, as part of the Australian syndrome of "cutting down tall poppies".

As to what the latest upheavals really mean for the future ownership of Fairfax, Mr Powers readily admits it would be "disingenuous" to ignore his five years at the helm of the Packer fleet of television stations and magazines.

The Australian Broadcasting Authority, a regulatory watchdog, has launched an inquiry into whether Mr Powers' ascent has breached the cross-media rule.

And what of Rupert Murdoch's camp? Lachlan Murdoch, his son and heir, who runs the Australian arm of the Murdoch empire, said on Tuesday that he would not be interested in buying any Fairfax papers that came on the market. "When you reach the size that we have become, acquisitions become difficult," he said. Presumably this was a reference to government regulations, rather than any shrinking ambitions.

RED CORNER

BRUCE HANNAH GENE

RED CORNER



Royal Academician Norman Ackroyd found a large number of submissions to the Summer Exhibition falling into two camps – Princess Diana tributes and works in the manner of the Young British Artist group

Photograph:
Rui Xavier

All kinds of everything

THE great strength of the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition is the incredibly broad cross-section of visual art it encompasses.

Sanctified by history (it has been held every year since the Academy was founded in 1768), it yet straddles past, present and future, and this year includes at least one Young British Artist from the *Sensation* show, Gary Hume. It may not be on the cutting-edge of contemporary art, but it is no longer a bunker for ageing reactionaries.

Take Norman Ackroyd (born Leeds 1938), who was elected to the Royal Academy ten years ago. He is a printmaker, renowned for his atmospheric landscape etchings. This year he has been on The Hanging Committee, with special responsibility for the prints.

When I interviewed him, the multi-part sculpture by Antony Gormley – 60 cast iron figures in various postures, some strung up from the facade of Burlington House and adjacent buildings – was being dramatically re-located by crane and hawser in the courtyard.

Acclaimed sculptor Norman Ackroyd guides Andrew Lambirth around the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition

"This is a great idea. We could have it being installed for the entire two-and-a-half months of the exhibition as a kind of happening, a performance piece. People are probably watching it more now than they will when it's in place."

"Sculptors will covet this courtyard as a great place to show. I think this is one of the ways the profile of the exhibition will change. Similarly with the print room: everybody wants to be in there. The submission of prints this year was phenomenal, and we selected more than we could hang in one gallery, so they are spread out through the other galleries amongst the paintings."

Ackroyd points out a woodcut of a father and child. "I don't know who it's by – that's one of the great excitements of the show. It's a privilege actually discover these things."

But isn't there a lot of dross to be filtered out? "That's inevitable, but you really get to see what's going on from Land's End to John o'Groats. Sometimes your eyes can't believe what they're seeing."

What characterised the send-in this year? "There are more people interested in the finish of what they do, with a sheer desire to make the thing sing on the wall."

Two themes stood out in the initial submission: pictures of Diana,

Princess of Wales, and work done in the manner of the YBAs. The selectors have to be rigorous. "There are ten pairs of eyes looking at each picture, but I pay especial attention to all works under glass – watercolours, drawings and all types of prints."

Looking round the print room, everything on the walls, except one large image of a tower by Maria Stroka-Robinson, is in fact under glass.

We talk of the tower. "That's not just a photograph on panels, it's an etching printed on paper and then mounted on linen in the way that the old maps were. I saw it when it was just a lot of pieces of paper on the floor at the Royal College and thought then what an ambitious piece it was. It's printed from 24 sheets of metal. That's an incredible amount of physical work: apart from the burning and scraping, it takes about three days to print."

Norman Ackroyd approves of

showing sculpture with the prints. He is so impressed with one object, *The Book* by Carl Danby, that he is seriously considering buying it. "It's two pieces of steel held together with wonderful big bolts, the kind you have on etching presses, with a burnt book in between the plates. I'd love to open it up and see what the text is, but that would destroy the mystery."

How different is this Summer Exhibition from any other? As Ackroyd stresses, a lot depends on the personalities of the members hanging the galleries.

For example: "Bryan Kneale and Phillip King, both of whom have an incredibly good eye for colour and materials, hung the two corner sculpture rooms very beautifully. And I think that one of the great things that we did last year was to move the architecture models out of Gallery VI which interrupted the long run of five galleries right down the north side."

Amongst the works that Ackroyd points out are the memorial groups to Carel Weight and Victor Pasmore (in Galleries I and II), and Patrick Proctor's version of *Perseus and Andromeda*, based by Kraka, east of Java, in Gallery III. In Gallery IV, Ackroyd memorably describes the yellow figure sculpture by Malcolm Poynter as "a human barley-sugar stick".

A number of students have work on display. I ask Ackroyd whether they don't have enough exhibiting opportunities elsewhere: shouldn't the Summer Exhibition be reserved for older artists?

Ackroyd, himself a noted teacher, offers a curt response: "Students are artists. To eliminate young artists would be disastrous."

We're both struck by a large powerful drawing in Gallery V of the rush-hour crowds on Liverpool Street Station, done in conte and crayon by Jeanette Barnes.

A magnificent John Hoyland

abstract called *The Music* dominates Gallery VI. In Gallery VII Ackroyd singles out *Poohlie Mid-Afternoon* by Steven Rendall. "It's painted in colours that look like skin that's had too much sun. And the acidic chemical green of the widening pool gives it a sense of desolation. The whole thing is Benin as Hell."

Finally I ask the million-dollar question – has the Academy a future?

Ackroyd is indignant: "It's essential that the Academy continues. Nowhere else is an art establishment run in its way, by artists, and it's a great way to do it. The Academy will always change slowly because its strength is that once somebody is elected they stay."

"Each year we probably elect two or three new Academicians, which means 25 or 30 Academicians over ten years, which is a third of the membership."

"We already have some terribly talented Academicians – world figures – in architecture especially. Ultimately, this institution depends on the membership."

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INP/97

Chris Morris is dead... funny

The anarchic 'Blue Jam' show is a blunted sword on stage, but his disciples don't care. By Mike Higgins

THERE are two schools of thought regarding Chris Morris's scabrous progress through the Nineties.

From his beginnings on the merciless early Nineties current affairs radio satire, *On The Hour* and its TV treatment, *The Day Today*, to *Brass Eye* and most recently *Blue Jam*, Morris's career, according to certain critics, has been a textbook illustration of a brilliant talent shrugging off the necessary restraint of a sympathetic, but watchful producer.

Armando Iannucci, so the story goes, kept Morris's more extreme stunts in check (the media terrorist left Radio One in 1995 following a show in which he garnered reaction from various politicians to the news of Michael Heseltine's death) and then proved his worth by taking on to huge success Alan Partridge, the creation of Steve Coogan, an arguably less gifted early collaborator of Morris's.

In the view of Morris devotees, however, Iannucci's guiding hand fettered their hero's fevered imagination: a vision in which Morris's early morning/late night Radio One show, *Blue Jam*, finally delivered him from petty moral codes.

Few who turned up at the Battersea Arts Centre to sit on cushions in complete darkness for a performance of



Media marauder Chris Morris

music. Much of it Blue Jammers would have been familiar with: the belligerent driver furious with a garage for apparently shrinking his Vauxhall Carlton ("It's only two foot six high! How am I supposed to drive that?"), the acupuncturist who uses 14-inch nails on her patients ("Otherwise they'd slide off the table").

Blue Jam's best recurring character, a callously manipulative doctor interested solely in humiliating his patients, would seem to provide a rebuke. In one bizarre consultation, the physician castrates his patient into jumping up and down with his pants around his ankles before joining in.

Quite apart from rubbishing the position of secular sainthood into which popular drama has elevated the medical profession, beyond the absurd deadpan and exquisitely naturalistic production of this and every Morris creation you'll find the peculiarly English instinct to roll over before authority dissected in pathological detail.

Other than as a favour to Morris's brother, Tom, (BAC's artistic director), there seems to be little reason for the inclusion of *Blue Jam* in the "In The Dark" season, however (this was one of only two shows, though BAC hope to bring it back in the next couple of

months). Morris's explorations of the depths of human obsession and neurosis are as chillingly amusing as ever, but the feeling of fan club solidarity that settles on the room, along with the fact that we've heard most of the setches before, blunts the most incisive passages.

It's one thing to giggle alone; *Blue Jam*'s sociopathic meanderings at 1.30am. It's quite another to sit with 30 or 40 others listening to his fictional dialogue between a couple considering the fate of their abused and murdered child in the manner you'd expect in reaction to news of a miscreant's umbrella.

I first heard this sketch on the radio, but the illicit frisson its breathtaking tastelessness originally brought seemed far harder to enjoy when, by its conclusion, the audience's initial laughter had been replaced by a nervous fidgeting in the darkness.

Chris Morris is a deliciously oily vice and perhaps he ought to remain so.

IN TODAY'S EYE
ARCHITECTURE
AND DESIGN

مكتبة من الأصل

A witness to the worst of times

When Emmanuel Fisher, a British Jew, went to war, he hadn't heard of the Nazis' Final Solution. Then his unit was sent to liberate Belsen. By Jo Glanville

1ST
'Ope

BEFORE the war, Emmanuel Fisher had never kept a diary, but three weeks before VE day in May 1945, his unit was sent to assist in the liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and he began to keep a record of his experiences at "the horror camp", as the soldiers called it. "It was so horrendous that I thought in years to come I'd think that I'd exaggerated it, unless I kept a diary," he says. When he sent it to the newspapers after the war, he was told it was too horrific to publish.

Mr Fisher grew up in the East End of London. All his family were talented singers and he made his debut in the Yiddish theatre in Whitechapel at the age of 11. He later conducted the London Jewish Male Choir, with whom he made a number of records. There were hopes that he

lay unburied and 60,000 people were in need of urgent medical attention. The experience, he says, scarred him for life.

His Belsen diary is now part of an archive at the Imperial War Museum, and *Index on Censorship*, the journal that campaigns for freedom of speech, has just published an excerpt, along with other contemporary accounts, in its special issue, "Gagging For It", marking the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

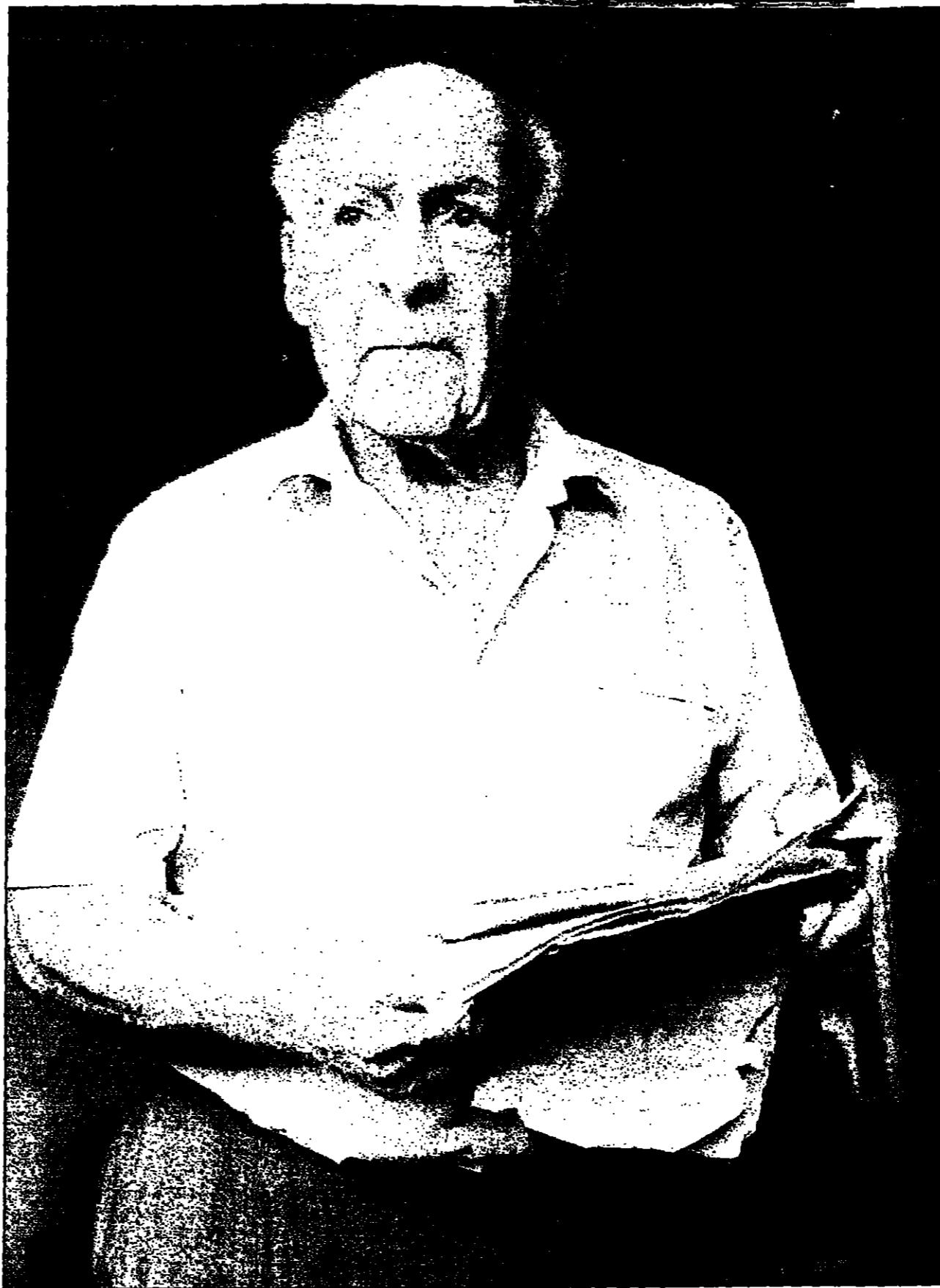
It is a remarkable document, not least because Fisher was the only Jew in his unit, and yet he makes just one oblique reference to the fact in his diary, when he describes giving a sweet to a young girl: "a co-religionist – as were most of these wretched people."

"I spoke, I suppose, as I always speak," he says, "as a humanitarian, not as one sect. When I was writing, I wasn't concerned with myself, I was writing about them."

The Germans had not originally intended Belsen to be an extermination camp. It was established in 1943 to house Jews who were to be exchanged for Germans interned in the UK and US. Within a year, it had become a dumping ground for Jews from other camps. Tens of thousands died from disease, neglect and starvation – among them Anne Frank. When the British entered the camp on 15 April 1945 after negotiating a truce, a typhus epidemic was raging.

The women had their heads shaved, skinny isn't the word for them," remembers Mr Fisher. "One of the main priorities was delousing them. I saw armies of lice on beds, armies like soldiers, columns for them on bed linen. There was a horrific scene in the first days of looking after these people. There was a little anteroom in a delousing centre and a nurse had this survivor lying on her back and she was washing her. And the poor survivor was so emaciated that where her tummy was, you saw this tremendous concave indentation. The nurse had to scoop the water out with a big scoop. There was nothing there, just this enormous, deep, deep cavity."

He still dreams about the wagon in which he used to develop X-rays. "It was a tremendous thrill developing the film, I



Mr Fisher's diary is a unique record of the horrors that greeted the allied troops

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

used to say, 'Manny, you're the first man to see this.' He says that his dreams are sometimes more vivid than his waking life.

There was little call for his skills as a radiographer at Belsen. "I was nurse and mother and father there," he says. Aged 24, he was put in charge of between 150 and 200 patients, the maximum usually tended at one time by the entire CCS. Within eight days, 6,000 patients were brought to the unit for treatment in army barracks outside the camp.

In one of the most shocking extracts from his diary, he describes how a number of naked patients rioted for food and attacked one of the nurses. Many had died from overfeeding when the camp was first liberated and a strictly controlled diet had to be administered.

He does not recall having any knowledge of the Nazis' Final Solution before arriving at Belsen and tells a chilling story which illustrates the ignorance of his unit. "When we got to the camp, the Sergeant said, 'Here, boys, help yourselves, there are a lot of watches here. I'm ashamed – I don't know

whether I took a watch but it didn't occur to me, we didn't know. We just thought it was booty that had been left lying around. Everybody grabbed watches. Dear God."

He wrote his diary in his tent by the light of a candle stub "at the end of a long filthy day". His unit was not supposed to go into the camp itself because of the typhus, but he used to sneak in with a mate. "The whole thing was just like a bad dream," he wrote. "I almost pinched myself to make sure that I was awake. The scene was more like a Hollywood representation of a concentration camp than the real thing. It was too unbelievable to believe. I was stunned."

Mr Fisher was also much in demand as an interpreter. He speaks German, French and Yiddish, among other languages. As a child, he showed a great talent for Hebrew and at the age of 10 he was teaching other boys their barmitzvah readings. His fellow soldiers called him "Shakey" (Shakespeare) in recognition of his education.

He came home on leave from Belsen in time for VE day. "I can remember vividly being on a bus going to Trafalgar Square

and at that time they were showing the newsreels in the cinemas about Belsen and I heard a couple of old lags, for want of a better word, saying, 'Oh, did you see that stuff in the news about the camp? Don't believe it, it's a lot of propaganda.'

"I couldn't join in the celebrations. I felt utterly dejected. Everybody was cheering like mad and I just felt miserable. You know, you get a different view when you come from something like that."

The army gave Mr Fisher's unit 10 weeks' holiday in Denmark in recognition of its work at Belsen, a time which he remembers with great affection. After the war he married and had four children. He believes it is vital to talk about his Belsen experiences. "It's too horrific for people to actually picture and their memories are short. The beginnings of it are happening again with the rise of neo-Nazi groups and man's general inhumanity to man."

Index on Censorship 3/98, Gagging For It, £8.99. Available from bookshops, or telephone 0171-278 2313.

• I couldn't look at them. My eyes filled with tears,

Emmanuel Fisher's Belsen diary, 21 April 1945

TODAY our CCS began to receive some hundreds of these patients – all women. We had cleared a number of houses (temporary German military barracks) and prepared beds in every available space.

The patients were first brought to a delousing centre, where they were bathed and deloused by German nurses under the supervision of staff. Then they came to us, born on stretchers by Hungarian soldiers we had conscripted as "unskilled labour", and were literally bundled into bed, for most of them were, or at least appeared to be, just nondescript bundles wrapped in three blankets. I helped to carry some of them in. They weighed three to five stone – less than my little brother aged nine.

Acting as interpreter, I had to talk to some of them. One Jewish woman, aged about 45, as far as I could guess by her conversation (it was otherwise difficult), said, as soon as she was put in bed, "Please, I want to go to America. How long have I waited for this moment. They shot my husband and two sons in front of me." Another said "Must I die? I am only 17". Another spoke to me in English. She was quite insane.

I was giving each a warm drink – it took one woman a full minute to bring her arm out of her blanket to grip the cup. I simply could not look at these human wrecks for more than a few seconds. I found my eyes filling with tears, and had to turn away from my comrades.

These women were not easily distinguishable – the same formula applied to them all from the neck downwards – just human skeletons.



Pte Fisher in 1945

"I don't know whether I took a watch. We just thought it was booty. Everybody grabbed watches. Dear God."

might become a rabbi, but he became a teacher instead.

The army trained Mr Fisher to be a radiographer in the Medical Corps. Photographs of the youthful Private show him to have been an extremely good-looking young man – his eyes are still very blue and sparkly – and his fellow soldiers look rather puny beside him. His unit – 32 Casualty Clearing Station (CCS), the Second World War equivalent of M*A*S*H – was a crack division, chosen to be the first CCS in Normandy on D-Day.

In his diary, he describes how they then spent months "idling" in Holland, before being suddenly sent to Germany. "We were happy," he wrote, "thrilled at last at the prospect of going into active service again." Instead, they were dispatched to Belsen, in north-west Germany, where 10,000 corpses

DILEMMAS

Don't count on your lodger becoming your friend



VIRGINIA IRONSIDE

Connie has a small room in her flat and as she's lonely she's thinking of letting a small room to a lodger. They'd have to share the kitchen and the bathroom. What are the pitfalls? Is it a good idea?

THE old-fashioned words for lodger were "paying guest", or PG. Those were the days when lodgers had strict rights, and had to behave like pretty good guests or they were out. There was no onus on the landlady to behave like a hostess, either.

It was a one-sided arrangement, with marks on the bath, to show how far the water was allowed to come up, and timetables for actually having one – usually once a week. And there were always lists of rules:

"No whistling in the corridors"; "Please make sure at night that the front door is LOCKED"; "Please leave this lavatory in the state you would wish to find it"; And, by the cistern: "Pull sharply and release slowly."

Today no lodgers would abide by such rules and as long as they pay their rent on time they feel they have rights – at least until the lawyers are brought in. Of course, Connie can get them to sign an agreement before they come, something that, after years of being abused by lodgers, I finally learned to do. Eventually, my lodgers were hardly allowed to do anything.

But there's always a clause

you forget. For instance: "Do not allow strange dogs to wander around the house at night" is not one that would immediately spring to mind, but after I found my two-year-old son pottering around with huge Alsatian at his heels one morning, the clause went in, batty though it sounded.

A foreign student could be a good idea, particularly one who barely spoke the language. Steer terror and anxiety usually makes these lodgers good guests. Or businessmen who always go back home at weekend and who are hardly ever there.

But these would hardly be company for Connie. And there's the rub. Connie seems to be looking for someone to stop her feeling lonely. And yet in my experience, once you've got a lodger in the house, alone is something you're quite desperate to be.

I once looked for lodgers who could also be friends and advertised in *Local*. I soon found myself in the middle of my house, sandwiched between an unemployed drug-dealer and a girl who, when I asked, as she moved in, what had happened to her last place, revealed that she had a habit of burning candles at night. "And unfortunately

my last flat, as a result, was destroyed in a fire," she said, sipping coffee in my kitchen.

Connie should get a man in a suit, or a young girl who comes with her nervous mother, who leaves her nervous phone number in case of emergency. Or an exhausted nurse who only has time to sleep. Or she should let the room cheaply to visiting Americans on very short-term lets (but remember their standards of hygiene are obsessive and they'll need new soap and fresh towels daily, and not a spot on the corridor carpet). She should put in a separate phone line, and preferably squeeze a tiny fridge and cooker in the small room.

The sad thing is that you can be just as lonely with a lodger as you can without a lodger, as I know myself. The ones who have lots of friends themselves are out all the time, so you feel neglected. The lonely ones with no friends are like that for a reason, and Connie doesn't want to be stuck inside with a loser night after night. If she's desperately looking for some extra money, yes, a lodger's the answer. If she's looking for frequent, friendly company, no.

up with a few mutually agreed rules. Just feeling your way and trusting to the belief that you're both nice people doesn't work.

And one more thing. My first landlady said the first time we met: "If there's anything that annoys or upsets you, say so. I shall." She and I were as different as chalk from cheese and we got along fine for five years and remained friends when I went to work abroad.

Beware, Connie! Deal with your loneliness by going out, reaching out, not by inviting in. Go to any group, club, society or event whose activities interest you.

Mary, Edinburgh

READERS' REPLIES

Years ago I was lonely and miserable and took on a lodger. I used his presence to assuage my loneliness and eventually married him. He is a boorish workaholic and we have no shared interests. I stay with him because we have three young children.

Beware, Connie! Deal with your loneliness by going out, reaching out, not by inviting in. Go to any group, club, society or event whose activities interest you.

Caroline Palmer

The essential thing is to have a few simple ground rules. Talk to the would-be tenant and say quite clearly when you want to have the kitchen to yourself, when you want to have your bath, wash your hair, use the washing machine and mention anything you feel strongly about – like un-done washing-up and a scum-line around the bath.

Then ask her (or him) what she (or he) feels strongly about, wants to do, can't do, and so on. The discussion must be friendly but also frank and must end

anything but hit it off, say you can't make a decision until you have seen everyone, and always make it clear that there is one month's notice on each side.

Don't expect too much. If

they are worth living with they are almost certain to have a life with the person.

Draw up a list of dos and don'ts so that there are no misunderstandings to sort out later – and have the rent paid by direct debit. The best of luck to you.

Shirley Currie

NEXT WEEK'S DILEMMA

Six years ago my husband of

twenty years left my teenage daughter and myself in the house, never to return. He didn't even kiss me goodbye.

A week later his body was found in his car, 10 miles away, in a field with a tube attached from the exhaust. He left no note, and to this day I have no idea why he did it.

He had been rather bad-tempered for the six months previously, but apart from that, nothing I cannot get over it. I ask myself: "Why, why why?" all the time.

We had a good marriage and a lovely daughter. It has affected her very badly.

I feel like a zombie most of the time and in spite of

counselling, I feel I will never get over him. We loved each other so much, I thought.

I just go over that last day again and again. How could he have done it to us? How can I cope?

Monique

Letters are welcome, and everyone who has a suggestion quoted will be sent a bouquet from Interflora.

Send comments and suggestions to Virginia Ironside at the Features Department, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. (fax 0171-293 2182), by Tuesday morning.

If you have a dilemma of your own that you would like to share, please let me know.

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West dithers as Kosovo burns

AGAIN AND AGAIN, it has been the same story in the Balkans. The crisis builds. And then it builds some more. The West wrings its hands and regrets there is nothing that it can do. And then, when it is far too late to take serious action — when the house is already ablaze, and the structural timbers have fallen in — somebody decides to fetch a couple of fire extinguishers off the wall.

Thus it was in Croatia. Thus it was again in Bosnia. And now, it seems, we are seeing a repeat performance in Kosovo. None can say that this is an unexpected war. On the contrary, there have been predictions of conflagration ever since the Balkan wars began seven years ago this month. Slobodan Milosevic, the Yugoslav President, began his rise to power by preaching nationalism in the Albanian-majority province of Serbia. All the time, however, the politicians have been too busy, and have looked the other way.

What was just a few months ago still a smouldering conflict has now begun to blaze up in earnest. This week, several villages in western Kosovo were reportedly destroyed by Serb forces in the latest clashes with the increasingly violent Albanian resistance in the region. Still, President Milosevic, chief author of the region's misfortunes, remains in power. And still the West seems keen to not to upset the Milosevic applecart.

Tony Blair declared yesterday that Nato would not tolerate an escalation of conflict in Kosovo. "We don't believe we could afford to have a situation of disorder spreading in that part of the world." In reality, Mr Blair's declaration is futile — all too reminiscent of the ringing declaration by the then US Secretary of State, James Baker, in spring 1991, that the US "would not permit" Yugoslavia to fall apart — a statement Mr Milosevic took as a green light for using tanks to keep the federation together.

Paddy Ashdown was right to warn yesterday of the dangers of doing too little, too late — a warning which he unsuccessfully sounded on Bosnia. Mr Blair pretended to agree. But his statement that "we are watching the situation extremely carefully" will not have Mr Milosevic trembling in his boots.

The greatest paradox of Mr Milosevic's cynical policies is that the losers include his own compatriots. Non-Serbs have suffered untold horrors in recent years. But Serbs have also been heavy losers. Their early victories turned into bitter defeats, as they were driven out of territory in Croatia that they had occupied for centuries.

Thus it may well prove to be in Kosovo, which Serbs continue to regard as their heartland, even though Serbs are fewer than 10 per cent of the population. A Kosovo unconnected to Belgrade seemed until recently unthinkable. Slobodan Milosevic is making that extraordinary possibility come closer, however. If or when the massacres get serious — so serious that the politicians can no longer "watch the situation extremely carefully", but must attempt to pour water on the blaze — then it will be too late. Crushed by Serb force, the Albanians may lose much in the short term — but it is the Serbs who will lose everything in the longer term.

The knock-on effects — involving Bulgaria, Macedonia, and perhaps Greece and Turkey — are enormous. "Watching the situation carefully" will then be remembered as the fudge that it really is. If Kosovo matters, then it matters today. Tomorrow will be too late.

Schools pledge spins out of control

NEW LABOUR'S team of spin-doctors must remember when their five election pledges looked simply masterful. Their famous five pledges were slapped on to big posters, little cards and coffee mugs. Clear, simple, easy to remember. They were modest, and soothed the nerves of the anxious taxpaying of Middle England. The pledges may have been routinely described as "timid" but this was far preferable to being accused of socialist idealism. But they did still betoken some sort of commitment to the public services.

Just over a year into the government, though, and the spin-meisters must now be feeling a little edgy. In their own formulation, we have passed through the "post-euphoria, pre-delivery" stage and some serious and awkward questions about the chances of their "early" promises being redeemed even by the next general election are now being asked.

The Local Government Association's new report casts severe doubt on Labour being able to fulfil its ambition to reduce class sizes for five- to seven-year-olds to less than 30. At the practical level of running an infants' school, a head who has classes over the limit will have to resort to mixed-age teaching. This, however, is not always an ideal solution and is disliked by parents. The alternative — for the Government — is to reduce parental choice by going back on its reforms and restricting entry to schools where class sizes are rising — just the ones that parents want to send their children to. If the Government finds those solutions unappealing then it could raise taxes to fund the guarantee. Politically poisonous.

It need not have been so. The emphasis on class sizes no doubt went down well with focus groups, opinion polls and, indeed, the voters. But the very clarity of the formulation lent it an undue rigidity. Had the spin-doctors taken the policy implications more seriously, then they might have looked to America, where they prefer to regulate on the basis of the average class size, so building flexibility into the regime. In Scotland, where class sizes are subject to the law, they work on the basis of a band. In any case, being in a class of 31 rather than 29 must make a rather marginal difference, and not one that would justify the distortions that may be visited on teaching in the name of this pledge.

So it came to pass that the Government was throttled with the thinnest of threads. All of Mr Blunkett's excellent work on standards and tackling bad schools could be undone by a single soundbite. It is a salutary lesson in the dangers of putting spin before substance. The spin-doctors chose the wrong way to present the wrong target. They have also chosen the wrong way to restore faith in the ability of politicians to keep their promises.

Yesterday's men? Don't worry, they'll soon be back in the news



MILES
KINGTON

WE'RE NOT going to have another piece about Paul Gascoigne today, I hope?

No. Paul Gascoigne is yesterday's news. Yesterday's news is here today and gone tomorrow.

And gone for ever?

Certainly not. Yesterday's news always comes back when you have forgotten all about it. Sometimes it comes back as "Where Are They Now?" Sometimes it comes back as material for quizzes. Sometimes it only comes back as an obituary. But it always comes back. Have you ever noticed the way Myra Hindley returns endlessly to the headlines? Or Edwin Currie?

Yes. But there never seems to be any good reason for their hitting the news again.

There isn't. It is simply a case of yesterday's news coming back again, even if nothing has happened to cause it. Yesterday's news, whether it is news about Lord Lucan or the Great Train Robbery.

always comes back like Halley's Comet. It's certainly true that news fides. The other day I saw a heading in, I think, "The Spectator", saying "Michael Howard reviews Gitta Sereny's book on Mary Bell", and I thought to myself: Heaven above! How quickly we forget names that were once in the news!

Quite. Last year Michael Howard was reviled by all, and now he is forgotten. Except by *The Spectator*, of course. The last issue of *The Spectator* I saw, there was a full page article by Michael Howard's wife. Expect pieces by the Howard children any day now.

No, not Michael Howard — I was really thinking of Mary Bell. A week or two ago she was national enemy No 1, for making money out of a murder. Now she is forgotten again. Can things change so quickly?

They can in tabloid time. Tabloid time is different from real time. It moves much faster. It is governed by boredom. When people get bored, time moves on.

When the readers get bored, you mean?

No. When the editor gets bored. But with Mary Bell, it was slightly different. She was being execrated for taking money for talking about a crime. A couple of days later all the tabloids were full over each other in an effort to pour money on two nurses who had committed murders. Even the tabloids could see there was an element of hypocrisy here, so they back-pedalled on Mary Bell.

Murderers? But the nurses said they were innocent.

Sure. So did OJ Simpson. So did Louise Woodward. So does everyone charged with murder. But don't forget that the nurses were found guilty in a court of law.

Yes — a Saudi court of law! You think they would have fared any better here? In the country which gave justice to the Birmingham Six? Which behaved so well over Stephen Lawrence?

Yes, but...

Where Michael Howard spent half his time releasing and pardoning people who had been in prison most of their lives?

I thought you said that Michael Howard was out of the news? That's twice we've mentioned him!

Ah, but Michael Howard is only in the news because of Ann Widdecombe! Ann Widdecombe became famous when she dished Michael Howard's chances of becoming Tory leader. She was in the news again this week when she was promoted to the Tory front bench, prompting papers to ask, "How Will Anne and Michael Get On at the Same Table?". Another shining example of papers asking questions to which they have no answer. It's also a shining example of newspapers treating politics as soap opera, as if Widdecombe was only famous for disliking Howard. Most journalists can only understand or explain

politics when it is presented as a soap. Explain.

A lot of newsprint is expended on the supposed rivalry between Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, between Ann Widdecombe and Michael Howard, between Thatcher and everyone, between Ted Heath and everyone else, on Peter Mandelson and Alastair Campbell, on Robin Cook and the F.O.

Yes. And?

And nobody except the journalists gives a toss. It really bores the public rigid. It is the one great example of editors getting it wrong. Because THEY are mesmerised by politics as soap opera, they think the public will be as well. Do YOU think anyone remotely cares how Ann Widdecombe and Michael Howard behave towards each other? In the real world?

You're asking me? A reader? A question? You're right. I shouldn't have. Sorry. Not at all.



LETTERS

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

be global, urgent and implemented on several fronts simultaneously. There is no time to lose.

Professor AKBAR AHMED

Fellow, Selwyn College, Cambridge

Professor KHURSHID AHMED

(Former senator, Vice President,

Jamaat-Islami, Pakistan)

The Rev Dr EDWARD CONDRY

Rector of Rugby

Sir OLIVER FORSTER

(High Commissioner to Pakistan

1979-84)

ASH KARIM

SHAHDUL SADULLAH

Editor, *The News*

IMAN ABDUL SAJID

Director, Islamic Centre, Brighton

MOHAMMED SARWAR MP

(Glasgow Govan Lab.)

JAMES SHERA

Lord WEATHERILL

Cambridge

music would have been unimaginable without Muslim influence. All these cultural forms testify to the capacity of India to synthesise Islamic and Hindu elements to create the region's distinctive identity.

The "nationalist historians"

Popham cites regard that synthesis as

a contamination of the country's

pristine "essence", and demand the

marginalising of Islamic culture, cou-

pled to an aggressive stance towards

Pakistan. The nuclear arms race now

under way is part of that process,

which can only be defused by the re-

jection of the xenophobic and absurd

readings of history now emanating

from right-wing Hindu circles.

TIM WINTER

Lecturer in Islamic Studies

University of Cambridge

Gazza: the moral

Sir: You say ("Don't cry for Gazza", leading article, 2 June) that Gazza's

reputation as the most talented

player of his generation "tells us

more about that generation's abilities

than anything else". This comment puts into perspective England's

hopes in the coming World Cup

That an unfit 31-year-old with a

nicotine, alcohol and kebab depen-

dency is so vital to the team demon-

strates the weakness both of our

national squad and the game in this

country. The tears of the nation are

not for Gazza, but for the dearth of

real footballing ability in this coun-

try. Hoddle's sacking of our only re-

ally creative player has merely

brought this sad reality into sudden,

sharp focus.

There are hundreds of "fit" play-

ers in the Premiership for Hoddle to

choose from and he, like Graham Tay-

lor, seems to prefer industry to art.

With Gazza in the squad we still

won't win the World Cup, but I,

for one, would prefer to lose with style.

MATT PASTERFIELD

London NJ

music would have been unimaginable

without Muslim influence. All these

cultural forms testify to the capacity

of India to synthesise Islamic and

Hindu elements to create the region's

distinctive identity.

Sir: Suzanne Moore takes an article

spread across four columns (Comment, 3 June) to tell us that Gazza is

not a good role model for young

men. It is true that some young men

get stuck in perpetual adolescence.

So do some young women. It is true

that some men abuse their partners.

So do some women. I look forward

to Suzanne Moore's (surely) forth-

coming article on bad role models

for girls.

JOHN TIPPLER

Spalding, Lincolnshire

Sir: The alarmist tone of your lead-

ing article overlooks the scale of lot-

tery playing throughout the world.

The per capita sales in the UK are

24th on the international list. In 1997

we spent only £98 a head, whereas

South Dakota achieved £463.

Could poverty lead students to prostitution and drug dealing?



DAVID AARONOVITCH

WHEN I was a student back in the mid-Seventies, I was so poor that I could not even afford to buy my own cocaine. This wasn't a great tragedy because I was too scared to take cocaine anyway (it rots the nose off, apparently), so instead I smoked other people's cannabis and cultivated an ability to get very drunk on two rum and cokes.

Despite these cost-cutting strategies I was very hard up. Each day I calculated whether or not I had enough money for the return bus fare between digs and college, a packet of ten Park Drive, a cream cheese sandwich, a cup of coffee and two games of table football. Sometimes I didn't. For six months I wore someone else's clothes, including, on a couple of not-to-be-forgotten occasions, their underpants.

I shan't say I was happy but, whatever my tribulations, they seem to have been minor when compared to those of students today. In the last few weeks the new president of the National Union of Students (a post I filled in 1980) has talked of students who are so poor that they are actually suffering from malnutrition. Well, we didn't have that in my day.

Nor did many of my generation work our passage through college. Yet, in 1990 an NUS survey claimed that "many students are forced to skip lectures and miss essay deadlines to spend more and more time working in pubs, burger bars, shops and factories". My generation of students had no such excuses for missing lectures and deadlines. No such excuses, but we still missed them.

The terrible consequences of this modern impoverishment seemed to be on display this week at Isleworth Crown Court. Ms Hannah Thompson, a Young Musician of The Year semi-finalist in 1992, is on trial for smuggling half a million quid's worth of Brazilian cocaine into Britain. According to one account yesterday Ms Thompson, a violinist, apparently took to drug-smuggling "after drink and drugs shattered her self-esteem and crippling student loans meant she could not even afford to repair her recording equipment".

Now, I have no wish to quarrel with this report, though a pedant might point out that loans don't cripple – it's debts that cripple. But that as it may, the case suddenly reminded me of a BBC news item that I'd seen at the weekend, in which award-winning reporter Sue Lloyd Roberts had been investigating the phenomenon of student prostitution. Ms Lloyd Roberts (most famous for her undercover work in China) discovered a young student woman with a fuzzy face, down to her bra in a semi somewhere in the Home Counties, and a fuzzy student boy who rented himself out a £150 a throw. (Well, maybe not a throw.) The suggestion was clear, student financial hardship was leading more of our bright young things to take part in the sex industry.

Further evidence for this includes revelations about the student daughter of a politician, and a report of the establishment of a student male escort agency, being set up by a graduate of Peterhouse, Cambridge. The student newspaper of the University of London, *London Student*, agrees with this proposition, arguing that "the increasing media profile of prostitution amongst students indicates that this is a method of paying for university education that is becoming more attractive to students as a supplement to their diminishing grant".

So there we have it – malnutrition, drug-smuggling and prostitution – and all as the consequence of inadequate student grants and loans. And, presumably, there but for the Grace of God go I. Had I studied a couple of decades later, then perhaps I too might be sticking up cards in phone boxes advertising the exotic services of Slim Dave, or running round London with my turn-ups full of pills, powders and resins.

All right, I'm sceptical. Not about whether students are poor – I'm sure that many are. The fact that union bars do great business and that college car-parks are full of shiny little sportsters tells you only that those youngsters with rich parents are often doing better than ever before. But tell me, are the poor ones so very much poorer than the poor ones 20 years ago?

In those days part-time work was less of an option. There was no culture of it, especially after the tradition of helping out with the Christmas post was abolished in the early Seventies. We had weeny grants and went into debt with the bank. Now they have weeny grants-plus-loans and go into debt with the bank. Allowing for all sources of finance (including McJobs), there is little evidence that student living standards have declined markedly in absolute terms.

There is little evidence student living standards have declined markedly

But other things may have changed. The first is that I cost almost nothing to clothe when I was 20, and my chattels were minimal. No Walkmans, no telly, no CD player (just an old deck), no trainers, no labels, no foreign holidays, no car. And most of my contemporaries had none of these things either. And we did not go on the game.

Or so I assumed. But then a friend told me of a meeting with a woman who had been a student at the same time as me, up in Scotland. And she had combined a philosophy degree, with a highly remunerative sideline in escorting businessmen to clubs and hotel rooms. From Heidegger to Hello Dearie.

So, if we are hearing more about it now, it may not be solely the result of hardship. Part of it could be because we are more aware than we used to be of how easily money can be earned this way. Significantly, at the end of Sue Lloyd Roberts' report, she revealed that her semi girl was now considering giving up her university course altogether, so lucrative was it being a high-class call-girl.

And part of it could also be that this has always been going on; it's just that – in those days – no one would have owned up to it. Whereas, in these up-front days, if you don't flaunt it, it's usually because you don't have it.

Takeaway

Now, I have no wish to quarrel with this report, though a pedant might point out that loans don't cripple – it's debts that cripple. But that as it may, the case suddenly reminded me of a BBC news item that I'd seen at the weekend, in which award-winning reporter Sue Lloyd Roberts had been investigating the phenomenon of student prostitution. Ms Lloyd Roberts (most famous for her undercover work in China) discovered a young student woman with a fuzzy face, down to her bra in a semi somewhere in the Home Counties, and a fuzzy student boy who rented himself out a £150 a throw. (Well, maybe not a throw.) The suggestion was clear, student financial hardship was leading more of our bright young things to take part in the sex industry.

If you were Slobodan Milosevic, here's what you'd be thinking



RUPERT CORNWELL

DEJA VU all over again? So it would seem, six years after the Bosnian conflict began. Once more, history is repeating itself as tragedy, as Serbian security forces seal off and "cleanse" tracts of Balkan countryside.

Slobodan Milosevic, the last

despot of old Eastern Europe, purveyor of his own patented blend of failed socialism and rancid nationalism, is again playing at war, this time in Serbia's mostly Albanian province of Kosovo.

Entire villages are laid waste, hundreds may be dead, while tens of thousands of refugees are reported fleeing for sanctuary in neighbouring Albania proper. As in 1992, the West wrings its hands and threatens sanctions, but seems no more willing than before to risk blood and treasure to put an end to the rampage.

Such is the former Yugoslavia, as viewed by the world – a place incapable of change, where medieval hatreds invariably triumph over new millennium reason. But stop for an instant, pretend you are

Mr Milosevic and consider the former Yugoslavia from the vantage point of Belgrade. The panorama is one of unrelied disaster.

The vision of the Greater Serbia you dangled before your people is a mockery. You are virtually isolated within Europe, your economy is a wreck. Thanks to the conflicts you helped unleash, Slovenia has gone, Croatia has gone, Macedonia has gone and Bosnia has gone.

Apart from Serbia itself,

only tiny Montenegro remains of the six republics of Tito's federation – and last weekend

you watched as your man in Montenegro was roundly defeated by a reformer, Milo Djukanovic, who says he will carry his market-oriented economic policies, and his strategy of rapprochement with

Europe, into Serbia itself. And this time you cannot complain the elections were rigged. On the streets below you the mutterings are starting: why not a reformer here as well?

And contrary to appearances, this time NATO will be no pushover. True, in Brussels yesterday, the alliance was taking its time. But, and you know it, NATO has learnt the lesson of Bosnia – that words unbacked by deeds, the bluff which you can call, only guarantee disaster. And this time the stakes are higher.

Bosnia was ghastly, but there was never great danger of the fighting spreading much further afield. This time it just could: to Albania, obviously, and to Macedonia where a quarter of the population is ethnic Albanian, and thence to Bulgaria,

Greece and Turkey. An unlikely scenario, admittedly, but another reason why NATO will act to contain the conflict and – as a last resort – intervene to stop it.

Yet the nationalistic passions you have stoked propel you forward.

Your best bet, you have calculated, is this early, large-scale and ruthless strike against the insurgents. That way perhaps you will be able to restart "negotiations" over the future of the province from a position of strength.

But will your people stand for

much more of this, especially if the Western allies cut off the outside investment that was the best chance of hauling your economy out of the doldrums? Sooner or later they will find out that the Western powers do not advocate independence for Kosovo along

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BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER
NEWS DESK: 0171-293 2636 FAX: 0171-293 2098 E-MAIL: INDYBUSINESS@INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Murphy said the move would cut the company's costs of capital

NFC returns a quarter of its value to shareholders

By Peter Thal Larsen

THE TRANSPORT group NFC yesterday became the latest company to hand back cash to shareholders in a move which will see them receive £307m, representing a quarter of the company's market value.

In a complex move, NFC plans to issue new shares to investors which will then be cancelled in return for cash. It will then consolidate its remaining share capital, so that shareholders will receive three new shares and 176p in cash for every four shares they currently hold.

Gerry Murphy, chief executive, said NFC wanted to return the proceeds of its disposal programme, which has raised £250m in the past twelve months, to its shareholders. He said the move will also increase the amount of debt on NFC's balance sheet. This will reduce the company's cost of capital, because debt is cheaper to service than equity. "We will now have a rational capital structure and a sensible cost of capital," he said.

Analysis calculated that the cash distribution would take NFC's balance sheet gearing to about 80 per cent by the end of

its financial year in September. Profits are likely to cover its interest bill about six times.

Mr Murphy said the debt burden was not too heavy, because the group did not have any immediate plans for acquisitions.

NFC is understood to have opted for a complex distribution to avoid a large tax bill. A straightforward share buy-back would have required it to pay approximately £60m to the government in Advance Corporation Tax - a sum it is unlikely ever to recoup. Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, is planning to phase out ACT next year.

Analysts were generally upbeat about

the move, which had been expected after NFC sold off a string of peripheral businesses. NFC shares closed up 3.5p to 181.5p.

At the same time, however, NFC said it was planning to cut its full-year dividend to 5p per share, compared to the 7.1p the group paid out last year. The company aims to have its dividend covered twice by earnings per share.

The move came as NFC announced a 4 per cent jump in profits before tax and exceptional items, to £51.9m, for the six months to March 31. Turnover edged up 2 per cent to £1.09bn.

Mr Murphy said the cash distribution ended a lengthy period during which the company has restructured heavily. "It's been about three years since I joined NFC. During that time we have been trying to reshape the business," he said, adding that NFC was now "narrower and lighter".

He added that the company's operations in continental Europe, which reduced operating losses from £4.7m to £1.8m in the period, was likely to break even next year. The American businesses, where profits jumped 26 per cent to £12.9m, were "firing on all cylinders".

Railtrack shares leap on link deal

By Michael Harrison

THE CITY yesterday gave the thumbs-up to the deal struck between Railtrack and the Government to rescue the £5.5bn Channel Tunnel Rail Link.

Shares in Railtrack raced ahead as the operator of the national rail network announced that it had reached an agreement to take over the 68-mile link in two stages at a cost of £3.3bn.

Under a complex financing plan announced in the Commons, the Government will effectively guarantee a £2.7bn bond issued by the developers of the project, London and Continental Railways, to complete construction of the link from the Kent coast into London's St Pancras station.

The bond issue will be in addition to the £1.8bn of public

subsidy already committed to the project.

Railtrack has agreed to acquire the first phase of the link, from the tunnel to Ebbsfleet in north Kent, for £1.5bn in 2003. It has also taken an option to buy the second, more expensive phase of the link, into St Pancras, for £1.8bn in 2006.

Railtrack will make a profit from the access charges British Airways and National Express will pay to operate Eurostar services between London, Paris and Brussels. The Government has agreed to fund £140m of the access charges between 2010 and 2020 if there is insufficient passenger income to cover Eurostar's payments to Railtrack.

City advisers involved in the restructuring of the deal estimated that by agreeing to underwrite the bond with its own credit rating, the Government will rise from 6 million last year

to between 7.5m and 8 million when the first phase of the high-speed link opens in 2003 and double to more than 12 million once the link goes to St Pancras.

Railtrack shares rose 41p - more than 3 per cent - as details of the rescue plan emerged.

Official underwriting of bond saves £1.2bn in financing, say City advisers

Chris Tarry, transport analyst with Dresdner Kleinwort Benson, said it was "pretty satisfactory" from Railtrack's standpoint.

It is an important commercial issue, the bond will in effect act like a gift. When Railtrack repays the Government on such an important and high-profile project.

By backing the bond with its

investment spending on the rest of the rail network by 16 per cent to £1.45bn this year and complete the refurbishment of half its stations by next year and all of them by 2001.

This came as it brought forward its full-year results by a day, announcing that pre-tax profits last year rose 12 per cent to £388m on turnover of £2.4bn. The final dividend was increased to 16p, making an increase for the year of 8.6 per cent.

The lobby group Save Our Railways attacked the news claiming that Railtrack was making more than £1m a day on taxpayers' subsidies of £5m a day. Its campaign director Jonathan Bray said Railtrack was "little more than a gigantic money laundering machine turning public subsidy into private profit".

Meanwhile Railtrack dis-

closed that it is to increase its

'Rift' claims as Treasury chief retires

By Lea Paterson

Sir Terence Burns, the most senior civil servant at the Treasury, is to take early retirement, prompting renewed speculation about a rift between the Treasury mandarin and Gordon Brown, the Chancellor.

The 54-year-old permanent secretary to the Treasury is to step down at the end of the month, and will receive a life

peppercorn.

Sir Terence, brought into the Treasury by Baroness Thatcher in 1980, will be replaced by Andrew Turnbull, 53, permanent secretary to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, and a former Treasury official.

Mr Brown, whose officials have continually played down rumours of disagreements with Sir Terence, called the Treasury's top official "one of our country's outstanding post-war economists and public servants".

The Chancellor said: "I know that the Treasury - and chancellors of both parties - have reason to be grateful for the expertise, wisdom and quiet resilience he has brought to the job of Permanent Secretary. I am pleased to count Terry not only as an adviser, but as a friend."

Sir Terence said: "I have decided that now is the right time to consider a fresh challenge and a different mix of responsibilities in the next period of my working life."

Francis Maude, the newly appointed shadow Chancellor,

called Sir Terence "the most senior victim to date of Labour's instinct for riding roughshod over the Civil Service".

Mr Maude said: "Time after time, Gordon Brown has ignored Sir Terry's advice. Time after time, the permanent secretary has been excluded from policy discussions by Mr Blair's coterie of advisers. No wonder Sir Terry has decided that enough is enough."

Observers say Sir Terence, a former economics lecturer, failed to shake off his Thatcherite image and was repeatedly squeezed out of key policy discussions by the Chancellor's "inner circle".

"He was always seen as Thatcher's man," remarked one source.

Andrew Turnbull, Sir Terence's replacement, was formerly deputy permanent secretary to the Treasury, and was principal private secretary to both John Major and Lady Thatcher. He was a key member of Norman Lamont's Treasury team in 1992, when sterling was forced out of the European exchange rate mechanism.

More recently, Mr Turnbull interviewed for the position of Cabinet Secretary, the most senior Civil Servant post. The post eventually went to Sir Richard Wilson.

Sir Richard Moir, the other candidate for the Cabinet Secretary's post and currently permanent secretary at the Ministry of Defence, will replace Mr Turnbull at the Department of Environment.

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End of the road for Rolls enthusiasts' bid

By Michael Harrison

VICKERS all but closed the door yesterday on a rival bid for Rolls-Royce Motor Cars from a group of enthusiasts by saying that tomorrow's meeting to approve the £430m sale of the business to Volkswagen of Germany would almost certainly go ahead.

Crewe Motors, the consortium of Rolls-Royce and Bentley owners attempting to put together a last-minute bid, said yesterday that it still hoped to table an offer by Friday.

The consortium's advisers have had discussions with Vickers' financial advisers Lazarus Brothers and a bid of more than £430m has been discussed.

But Michael Shrimpton,

the barrister heading Crewe Motors, said it would take longer than Friday to secure letters of credit and other legally binding assurances from his backers, said to include a British clearing bank and a US billionaire.

"What I can't promise is to match VW this week," Mr Shrimpton said.

In the absence of a cast-iron unconditional bid, Vickers will proceed with its extraordinary shareholders' meeting, due to take place tomorrow morning at the Royal Horticultural Halls in central London.

"We still have not got a formal offer so we are going ahead as planned," said a Vickers spokesman. "We do not take kindly to the idea of postponing the meeting

and we cannot see that it will be knocked off course."

If the meeting went ahead and shareholders approved the sale of R-RMC to VW then would be the end of the matter.

"There comes a point at which we reach the end of the road and that would be it," the spokesman added.

Earlier this week Vickers said that if the meeting was delayed then the earliest the sale could be completed was September. That would create risks and uncertainties for the business.

Vickers says that the total value of the VW bid is likely to be between £460m and £470m including working capital injected into R-RMC since the start of the year which the German carmaker will fund.

Andersen ends talks with leading solicitors

By Roger Trapp

ACCOUNTANCY firm Arthur Andersen's attempt to break into the upper tier of the UK legal market has ended in acrimonious failure, with the calling off of talks with City solicitors Wilde Sapte.

The two firms issued a joint statement yesterday, but it is clear that the initiative came from Andersen.

The firm, which has been making serious inroads into the legal field through setting up an associate firm under the name Garrets and acquiring the Scottish practice Dundas & Wilson, claimed that the defection of two Wilde Sapte partners to rival firm Allen & Overy meant the deal was not what it appeared when merger talks were announced in March.

However, Stephen Blundell, Wilde Sapte's marketing partner, said the departure of those partners was not as significant as that of their former team leader, Graham Smith, who announced he was moving to Allen & Overy before the talks began.

He added that other concerns about the proposed merger with an organisation that employs more than 100,000 people around the world - notably from the Paris office and from practice areas with significant potential conflicts - had been there since the talks began.

Nick Prentice, Andersen's European managing partner for tax and legal services, explained the decision by saying that he and his colleagues had been attracted to Wilde Sapte's "excellent reputation in

banking and finance and their international strength". However, he added: "Our objective to form a merged firm of the highest quality by allying these strengths to those of our own legal network depended on the original elements of the transaction being preserved intact.

He added that other concerns about the proposed merger with an organisation that employs more than 100,000 people around the world - notably from the Paris office and from practice areas with significant potential conflicts - had been there since the talks began.

Had the deal gone ahead, Wilde Sapte, a respected City firm with more than 70 partners and 600 staff, would have helped Andersen into the top five in terms of worldwide coverage, with 1,400 lawyers operating in about 30 countries.

Andersen already has the largest law firm in Spain and a significant presence in other mainland European countries.

Backing for MPs who oppose betting link-up

a 36 per cent share of the UK retail betting market. The company has already sold 133 shops to satisfy anti-trust concerns. Further disposals could endore the scope for cost-savings.

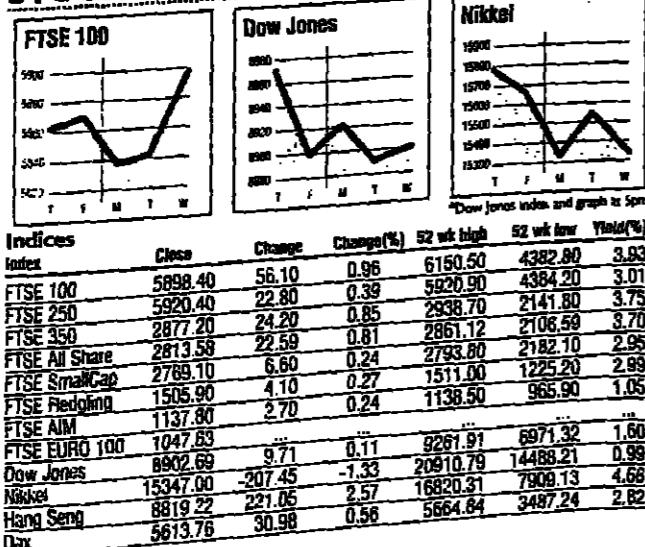
"My best guess is the MMC will come out and say Ladbroke has got to sell X amount of shops," said Roy Owens, an analyst at Merrill Lynch. "One hundred to 200 wouldn't be too bad as the majority of the synergy benefits would still be there. If they had to sell 600 or 700 it would not be good news."

Ladbroke has said it will reap £10m of savings from the acquisition in the first full year.

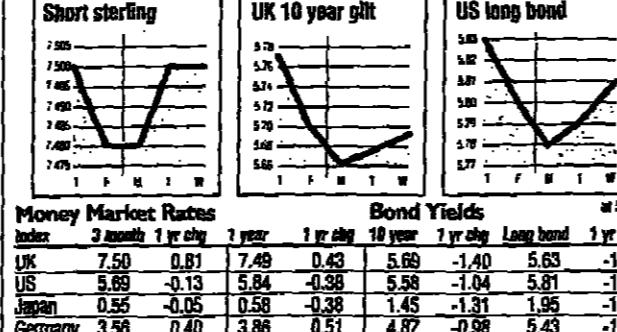
The MMC will release its report on 7 July and Mrs Beckett will make a ruling within 20 days.

Yesterday in the markets

STOCK MARKETS



INTEREST RATES



MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Price (\$)	Chg (\$)	% Chg	Falls	Price (\$)	Chg (\$)	% Chg
CIMB	1,905.00	165.00	9.48	Beson Holdings	415.00	-30.00	-7.4
Telwest Comm	106.50	8.00	8.72	Regal & Sun All	655.00	-45.00	-6.54
BBH	269.50	21.00	8.45	Currys	444.00	-21.50	-4.62
MF Furniture	67.50	5.50	8.71	Mitro Group	235.00	-10.5	-4.31
London Fortar	368.50	22.00	6.35	Pingstone	142.50	-3.5	-3.72

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY PETER THAL LARSEN

NFC is over the worst

IT'S THREE years since Gerry Murphy took the wheel at NFC, and he has taken shareholders in the transport and distribution group on a pretty hairy ride. Despite the upbeat response to yesterday's results and massive share buy-back, the shares – which rose 3p to 181p – are just about back where they were when Mr Murphy took over. At the same time, the market has risen sharply.

Still, it looks as if NFC is over the worst. It has sold off all its peripheral businesses in order to concentrate purely on distribution and moving services. The cost-cutting that still needs to be done in the UK and continental Europe has been fully provided for, and should be more or less over this year.

Mr Murphy's priority now is on expanding the business in continental Europe and the Americas. Since the cash distribution will take gearing to about 80 per cent by September, there is not too much scope for deals. The company claims that it would be happy to ask shareholders for the money back if the right deal came along, but admits nothing is imminent. So any growth is likely to come from winning new contracts, and further improving efficiency.

In that respect, NFC has a lot to do. Operating margins in the Americas are just 3 per cent while the European business, despite a drastic improvement, is still loss-making and is only scheduled to break even next year. NFC needs more scale so it can spread its overheads, and building that up will take time.

Meanwhile the UK, where profits were up just 4 per cent on flat sales, is unlikely to provide much excitement. Unsurprisingly, NFC also made cautious noises about tough competition in distribution and weakness in the house moving market.

Analysts are looking for full-year profit figures, before exceptions, of about £125m. That puts NFC shares on a forward earnings multiple of 16. Mr Murphy is to be congratulated on what he has achieved. But those hoping that the shares will make up in the ground they have lost in recent years will be disappointed. Hold.

Morland has a lot to swallow

MORLAND, the Oxfordshire brewer, has been suffering from a prolonged bout of indigestion. In the past year, it

has swallowed both the Exchange Diners chain of eateries and Ruddles, the Rutland brewer beloved by real-ale enthusiasts. The result is that the shares have never regained the 500p level at which the £22.2m rights issue was pitched early last year.

Turnover rose by 50 per cent for the six months to 31 March and operating profits, before exceptional items, were up 19 per cent to £7.8m. But Exchange has required substantial expenditure on refurbishments, reorganisation costs at Ruddles came to £1.32m, while a brewing contract worth £1.2m in the first half year has not been renewed.

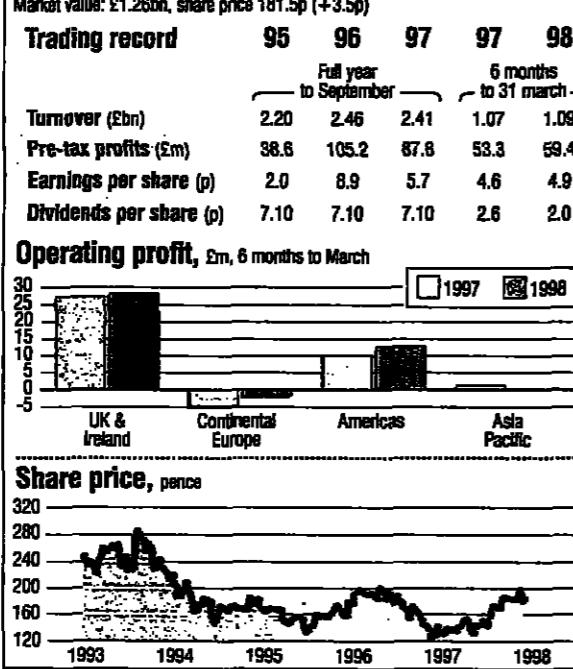
The Rutland brewery will also close this autumn with additional costs of £900,000. Sales of Old Speckled Hen, the group's well-known bitter, grew by 19 per cent in a declining national market. Not including Ruddles, beer sales rose by 11 per cent while brewery profits climbed to £2.5m. The tenanted estate also bucked the national trend.

Debt and interest charges are well up on a year ago and the tax charge has risen. Morland needs to spend a further £1.5m on fermentation capacity at Abingdon in the next few months, although the transfer of Ruddles production will raise capacity utilisation there from 60 per cent to around 90 per cent and produce cost savings of around £800,000 a year.

The second half has got off to a slow start with widespread flooding in Morland's Thames Valley heartland. For the full year analysts are edging forecasts up to £18.2m. The shares closed unchanged at 407.5p yesterday. At just under 10 times forecast earnings, they look high enough for now.

NFC: At a glance

Market value: £1.26bn, share price 181.5p (+3.5p)



Shanks thrives on rubbish

IT MAY be a cliché, but Shanks & McEwan is proving that it can make a handy amount of brass out of handling muck. In the past year, the grubby business of running landfill sites and burning BSE-ridden cows helped push up underlying profits for the year to March by 13 per cent to £25.4m.

There are two factors behind Shanks' success. First, the demand for landfill sites, combined with increasing restrictions on the creation of new ones, means that space is at a premium. Shanks has 125 million cubic metres of free space, two thirds of which already has planning permission.

Second, Shanks' incineration business is running at full tilt after winning a three-year contract to burn bonemeal made from slaughtered BSE cattle. Profits at the unit almost doubled to £1.75m, and are set to rise further as Shanks pushes through efficiency improvements. The government's enthusiasm for incineration as a cleaner way of disposing of waste, combined with a reluctance to allow new incinerators to be built, means that demand should be healthy even once the contract ends.

Looking ahead, using the methane gas thrown off by landfill sites to generate electricity is a growing business – it generated "tens of millions" of pounds of revenues last year.

All this adds up to encouraging growth prospects, and upgraded profit forecasts mean the shares – up 12.5p to 197.5p yesterday – now trade on a forward multiple of about 19. Even though they've doubled in the past year, the shares are still good value.

Poirot takes a stab at merchandising



John Conlan, Chorion chairman, left, with "Hercule Poirot", board the Orient Express at Victoria station in London

By David Lister
Arts News Editor

PORCELAIN models of Hercule Poirot, Miss Marple detective games and jigsaws with scenes from *Murder On The Orient Express* will soon be on the market following the sale yesterday of a controlling stake in Agatha Christie to the entertainment and leisure group Chorion.

Virtually no merchandising of the

Queen of Crime has ever taken place. But that will now change dramatically, David Lane, director of Chorion, said last night.

His company acquired a 64 per cent share in Agatha Christie from Booker for £10m. The remaining 36 per cent will continue to be owned by members of the Agatha Christie family and family trusts.

Mathew Pritchard, the writer's grandson, will remain chairman of the company, which owns the

copyright of virtually all of Christie's works.

Chorion already has ownership rights to the works and merchandise exploitation of Enid Blyton, and in the last year earned £750,000 from such items as clothes and children's lunchboxes, and even Noddy chopsticks in Japan. The company also owns a number of nightclubs and operates the Pepsi Maxx cinema in the Trocadero entertainment complex in the capital.

Trocadero, formerly known as Trocadero, transformed itself as a leisure and entertainment group last September when it sold the Trocadero complex to Burford Holdings. Mr Lane said: "With Agatha Christie something needs to be done in terms of brand awareness. I envisage jigsaws with scenes from the feature films, detective games, activity books for children with treasure hunts and mystery solving."

IN BRIEF

Akzo agrees to sell Courtaulds units

HW GROUP, the recruitment company best known for its financial arm Harrison Willis, plans to seek a listing on the London Stock Exchange at the end of this month in a move that is expected to give it a market value of about £40m. The company, which is one of the stars of the latest *Independent 100* listing of fastest-growing private companies compiled by the *Independent on Sunday* and accountants Price Waterhouse, dates back to the 1950s, but it has grown especially rapidly since a management buyout in 1997, making profits of £3.9m on fee income of £40.3m in the year to 31 March 1998.

Heal's moves ahead

HEAL'S upmarket home furnishing chain which came to the stock market in March last year, reported a 13 per cent increase in sales and a 28 per cent leap in profits to £2.15m in the 28 weeks to 28 March, helped by the buoyant housing market in London and South-east England. But chairman Martin Boase warned that sales growth in the second half would dip into single figures after the exceptional growth in the second half of last year. The group hopes to announce sites for two new stores later this year. The shares rose 1.5p to 178p, still only 3p above the flotation price.

Merrill pays \$400m settlement

MERRILL LYNCH has paid \$400m (£240m) to settle a civil suit brought by Orange County, California, which went bankrupt in 1994 after losing \$1.6bn on complex securities bought from a number of banks, including Merrill Lynch. Orange County alleged that the bank had "wantonly and callously" sold risky investments. In a statement, Merrill Lynch said: "We are confident we acted properly and professionally in our relationship with Orange County."

Life and pensions booming

THE LIFE and pensions industry saw a 33 per cent jump in sales in the first quarter of 1998. Premiums into life, pensions and collective investments leapt to £1.638bn on an annual basis, compared to £1.226bn in the same quarter last year. Sales of unit trusts were unprecedented, jumping by 40 per cent to £1.8bn. Of this, £1.4bn went into PEPs in the run-up to the Budget.

SkyePharma to raise \$50m

SKYEOPHARMA, the biotech company that has deals with pharmaceutical giants SmithKline Beecham and Eli Lilly, yesterday announced plans to raise \$50m through an international offering of 36 million new shares, and to list its shares on New York's Nasdaq market. It said the proceeds would provide insurance against any unforeseen delays in commercialising its products. SkyePharma reported a pre-tax loss of £0.4m for the four months to 30 April, compared with a loss of £0.2m a year earlier.

Cortecs launches new company

CORTecs has launched OraTol, a new and independently funded biopharmaceutical company, which will develop novel products for the prevention and treatment of allergies and auto-immune diseases through the process of "tolerisation". Cortecs said three year financing of £4.996m has been arranged for the new company via a subscription for shares in OraTol in Japan and Europe. Cortecs will retain 75.20 per cent of OraTol, and the remainder will be held by other investors. The subscription values OraTol at £20m. OraTol has targeted a number of diseases which represent major worldwide healthcare problems.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Black (I)	37.60m (36.97m)	8.48m (0.15m)	14.76p (13.54p) 5.0p (4.5p)	
Whitelock Print (F)	73.10m (62.48m)	14.50m (8.37m) 10.78p (20.77p) 17.0p (15.25p)		
Bearce Holdings (F)	16.14m (15.10m)	0.716m (0.289m)	2.28 (1.0p)	0.6p (0.5p)
Evans Leaden (F)	(-)	13.86m (12.802m)	8.01p (8.03p) 3.75p (3.28p)	
Hink (I)	14.98m (13.21m)	1.52m (0.878m)	12.00 (3.4p)	2.0p (1.0p)
Ladbrokes (I)	27.68m (30.22m)	4.28m (4.01m)	7.3p (8.2p)	2.0p (2.0p)
Marklin (I)	65.73m (43.85m)	6.57m (6.83m)	15.0p (17.3p) 4.0p (-)	
NFC (I)	1.11m (1.17m)	59.4m (53.3m)	4.4p (4.3p)	2.0p (2.0p)
Premier Asset Mgt (I)	1.50m (-)	-0.256m (-)	-0.25p (-)	(-)
Shares & Markets (F)	177.00m (144.00m)	25.0m (22.4m)	8.9p (7.7p) 4.2p (3.0p)	
Victoria (F)	35.73m (36.76m)	1.005m (2.29m)	10.71p (31.02p) 3.5p (-)	

(F) - Final (I) - Interim * EPS is pre-exceptional * Dividend to be paid as a FDI

Investors flock to software flotation

By Peter Thal Larsen

JSB, the company which makes software to prevent "cyber-skiing" – workers surfing the Internet for fun when they are supposed to be working – will today announce that its stock market flotation was six times oversubscribed.

Institutional demand for the shares was such that the firm not only reached its target of raising £3.6m in new money, but also allowed institutional shareholders, including the Cheshire Council pension fund and Murray Johnstone, to sell shares worth £4.2m.

The flotation values the company, which is joining the AIM junior market, at £18.9m. Its shares, which have been priced at 200p, are due to start trading on June 15.

The new funds will allow JSB to launch a marketing campaign for its SurfControl Internet product in the US and the UK. The package allows companies to control employees' access to the Internet by authorising or blocking certain sites.

The company also sells products which fake applications based on the Unix server language and make them look like user-friendly Windows applications. In the 10 months to March, it made a £10,000 profit on sales of £2.36m.

Low-cost pensions carry misbuying risk'

By Andrew Verity

of saving their money in a government-approved vehicle that was wrong for their needs.

Ms Wiesner said: "When the products in question have government backing I fear that wrong decisions could be made in many cases. I marvel at the courage of the Treasury to put itself firmly in the front line should we end up with a misbuying scandal."

Under the proposals, the Treasury will give approval to individual Savings Accounts involving cash, insurance or unit trusts which track the FTSE 100 index. The accounts, to be introduced next April, must have low costs to get Treasury approval.

She said the plans would deprive consumers of valuable advice, putting them in danger

Ban clawback by employers, MPs demand

By Andrew Verity

back the value of part of a pensioner's basic state pension. The practice is justified on the grounds that employers have contributed to the basic state pension through National Insurance.

The practice, known as "pensioners' clawback", uses archaic rules dating back to 1948 to justify reducing pension benefits by anything up to the full value of the Basic State Pension. Barclays Bank, BP and Marks & Spencer are just three of the FTSE 100 companies who use it.

Kerry Pollard, Labour MP for St Albans tabled an Early Day Motion yesterday urging the Government to end the practice as part of its full review of pension policy.

More than 90 MPs have lent support to the campaign. William Hague, the Tory party leader, has also expressed an interest. If the campaign were successful, more than 40 per cent of FTSE 100 companies would be forced to step up their contributions to pension schemes.

Under the practice, more awareness of the practice among employees was "pitiful", Barry Jones, a spokesman, said. "This is wrong on all kinds of levels. Pension funds in the finance sector are awash with money. Morally, there is no justification for not paying this money to individual pensioners."

Employers use rules introduced in 1948 – originally designed to make the state pension affordable – to claw back the value of part of a pensioner's basic state pension. The practice is justified on the grounds that employers have contributed to the basic state pension through National Insurance.

Celsis board rejects cash bid

CELSIS International, the laboratory equipment group, yesterday rejected a bid by its US division, from Arthur Holden, who now lives in Chicago, had said that he was looking at making a bid for the whole company or taking it private.

It is understood that the Celsis board turned down a cash bid for Celsis Laboratory Group, its US division, from Arthur Holden, who resigned as chief executive last month, because the price offered was too low. CLG, which owns two laboratories in St Louis, Missouri, and New Jersey, accounted for around a quarter of Celsis's £16.2m turnover last year.

At the time of his resignation, Mr Holden, who now lives in Chicago, had said that he was looking at making a bid for the whole company or taking it private.

• Is Brown mad or bad, or is it just that there really is no war chest?



DIANE
COYLE
SAYS THE
REAL CHOICE
IS WHETHER
TO RAISE TAX

LEPRECHAUNS really exist, there is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, and Gordon Brown is hoarding £50bn in a chest under his desk that he could be spending on schools and hospitals. Or so you would believe from some of the attacks in the past week on the Government's comprehensive spending review, due to be published next month.

On one flank the Chancellor is under attack from the Liberal Democrats, who have put the £50bn figure on what they describe as a "war chest". Although the details of their recent document do make it clear that this is a theoretical future sum of money rather than an amount in the government coffers now, there is no doubt that their choice of the term is meant to make the casual reader – and who is not a casual reader when it comes to the details of the public finances? – think there is a secret stash in the Treasury.

The TUC has launched a simultaneous attack saying the size of the finances is prudent enough, and urging growth of public expenditure of 3 per cent a year in real terms. This would raise the share of gov-

ernment spending in national output from the present 40 per cent; the TUC ambition is something closer to the 50 per cent average in the rest of the EU.

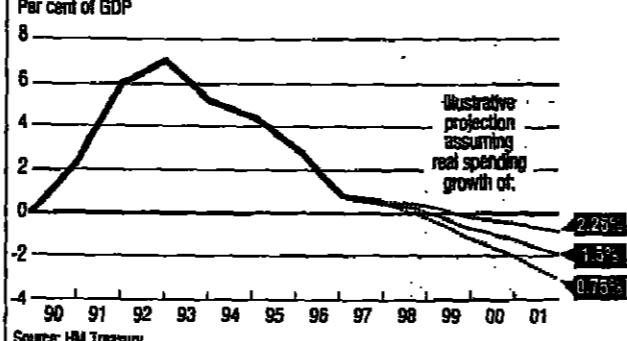
No doubt the Chancellor is also under pressure from the Government's spending ministers and much of his own party to tone down his prudence rhetoric and find more cash for the front-line services the voters care so much about. From much of the comment a visiting Martian, or leprechaun, would be forced to conclude that Mr Brown is a deranged latter-day Scrooge, hoarding taxpayers' money for no good reason when there are starving orphans or at least cash-strapped schools and hospitals out there.

Are they right? Is Mr Brown either wicked or mad? The answer is of course not. Rather, the issues are far more complicated than his critics are prepared to admit in their bids for popular approval.

First of all, it is worth remembering that the Government inherited a real mess. The national debt had doubled during John Major's premiership, leaving interest payments the fourth biggest item in the government budget. The Conservatives had won the 1992 election on a tax-cutting and spending spree which meant, despite subsequent tax rises, that there has still been an annual surplus of revenues over expenditure after six years of economic recovery. This year could be the first of several – but the economy is now slowing down, removing the natural cyclical boost to the state of the public finances.

Secondly, the notion that the Chancellor is building up a "war chest" rests on the prospect that, on the assumptions for spending set out in the Treasury's Red Book last Budget, revenues will increase by more than enough to satisfy the "golden rule". This rule is the basic law of prudent public finances which says the government should borrow no more than it invests, and current spending should be less than or

Alternative public sector borrowing requirements



equal to tax revenues.

This week Mr Brown spent out more clearly than ever his intention to have a surplus of revenues over current expenditure for the next three financial years. That is, year-by-year spending on items such as pay, benefits and running costs will have to be more than covered by taxes, whereas public investment can be financed by borrowing. The LibDems pounced on this as an admission that he will be even tougher than the golden rule, and urged higher spending instead.

But they ignore two caveats. One is that prudence is supposed to apply over the course of a full business cycle, and it certainly hasn't so far over this one. The other is that forecasts for public borrowing are notoriously unreliable. The average error in the Treasury's PSBR forecasts – and it does better than others – is approaching £10bn either way. Past chancellors have erred on the side of massive over-optimism in their borrowing forecasts. Kenneth Clarke cheerfully postponed budget after budget, the year in which he forecast a government surplus. All praise to Mr Brown for breaking with this dishonest tradition and erring on the side of caution.

When he has more money than predicted in the bank, then he will presumably spend it – and if that happens to be close to the next election, his fraternal critics will change their tune.

The Red Book sets out a range of forecasts for the future borrowing requirement which vary according to the real

spending growth they assume. The caution about growth in tax revenues is not spelt out explicitly, with just one possible path shown. The actual receipts might well be higher – or lower.

The highest path for spending in the Treasury's tables involves real increases of 2.25 per cent a year, the same as the economy's trend growth rate and therefore keeping the share of expenditure in the economy unchanged in the long run. This is low enough to meet the new pledge to have a surplus of taxes over current spending. It

implies an increase in spending in cash terms of about £12bn next year rising to nearly £40bn by 2001/2002. That doesn't look too Scrooge-like, although the critics still argue that it is not enough to meet the needs of a starved public sector.

They might be right, but they need to come clean about the implications of spending more. In a nutshell, these are: either to be as carefree as the Tories about controlling gov-

ernment borrowing, and hang the future consequences for the interest burden and stability of the economy, or raise taxes by as much as you want to increase spending. Big government is fine as long as it is solvent government.

The TUC's document does not mention tax increases on the apparent grounds that now Mr Brown has done prudence on existing spending plans there is no need to worry about sustaining it in future – even if spending were to expand faster.

The Liberal Democrats still have a policy of putting a penalty on the basic rate of income tax. This would raise about £2bn a year. Useful, but scarcely a cornucopia for the health and education budgets.

There is a real political dilemma at the heart of the spending debate, however. We would all like to see an end to the resource squeeze in frontline public services. In wealthy countries, voter demand for extra education and healthcare services increases at a faster pace than the economy grows implying that when they are provided by the public sector there will be pressure for government spending on these areas to increase as a proportion of GDP.

That implies that there is a choice to be made, once irresponsible borrowing is ruled out. Either taxes must increase to finance the extra spending, or private expenditure must plug the gap.

The Iron Chancellor has actually pushed through some tax increases in his two budgets, although so cunningly disguised that many City pundits, and the Liberal Democrats for that matter, have accused him of being too lax on consumers. But the Government has not yet made it plain to the electorate that if they want really big increases in their favourite types of expenditure they will have to vote one day for really big middle class tax increases. This is not an option we will find in next month's comprehensive spending review.

d.coyle@independent.co.uk

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

JOHN WILLCOCK



A BELLY dancer who claimed tax relief because her belly was a depreciating asset won her case in a Cairo court recently. The point has yet to be tested in a British court, according to Mike Wesinski from the Manchester office of national accountancy group Hacker Young.

"It's an interesting technical issue," Mike tells me. "One could argue that a belly is plant and equipment used by the taxpayer to carry on business, but the question of valuation then arises."

"Like footballers' legs or darts players' wrists, putting a precise value on the asset presents a problem," he says.

Mike goes on ruthlessly: "Quite evidently a belly will deteriorate over time with continuous gyration, but apportioning the resultant depreciation to professional endeavour or personal use could be quite tricky."

Mike came across this vital test case from Urbach Hacker Young, the global network of accountancy firms of which Hacker Young is the UK member.

He says his tax and forensic accounting departments will be more than happy to undertake a test-case for performers or entertainers whose principal assets are depreciating due to "the ravages of time, over-use, over-exposure or gravity."

WHAT'S the difference between the City and the Monster Raving Loony Party? Not much, according to Michael Hicks, who has just retired from Société Générale Strauss Turnbull after nine and a half years with the broker. Mr Hicks has also been Shadow Chancellor for Lord Sutch's party for the last decade.

"You can't retire from the Monster Raving Loony Party, though. Once you join, you're in for life," says Mr Hicks cheerfully.

The only difference between the party and people in the Square Mile is that "they dress differently – except on 'dress down' Fridays, when they look exactly the same," he adds.

Mr Hicks was director in charge of sales trading at SCST until 18 months ago, when

he became liaison officer between the firm and the financial press.

"I don't particularly want to retire. Three brokers have asked me to join them, there are a couple of news agencies ... I might go into spread betting business," he muses.

"It all seems very unreal, this retiring, that is until pay day, when the money doesn't go into your account," he adds.

At least one more year in the City would be attractive, he reckons. "I went into the City straight from school 49 years ago. It would be nice to make it 50."

Yes, but how did he meet Lord Sutch, leader of the party, I ask? "It was at a raving event down in Devon about 10 years ago. I signed up straight away. His policies made a lot of sense."

"For instance, he's in favour of abolishing income tax. Income tax was brought in by William Pitt to pay for the Napoleonic wars. He thinks we should now declare the Napoleonic wars over."

So which was more enjoyable – the City or the party? "The party is a giggle all the time. But at least in the City you can make money. In the party I just keep buying rounds." Sounds like journalism ...

IF YOU are looking for a "get rich quick" book with a difference, *God is My Broker* could be the answer to all your prayers.

Submitted "A Monk-Lycocon Reveals The 7½ Laws of Spiritual and Financial Growth", this self-help tome by Brother Ty, with Christopher Buckley and John Tierney, is published in the UK today.

Brother Ty, the nickname of a monk in the order of Saint Thaddeus in upstate New York, advises: "If God phones, take the call. How many times have you put God on hold?"

Brother Ty's advice, while based on religion, is also firmly rooted in the real world. For instance, he advises: "He who casts the first stone usually wins." He also believes: "God loves the poor, but that doesn't mean He wants you to fly coach."

When I tell you that fellow author Chris Buckley has also written a book called *Thank You For Smoking*, and that John Tierney is a staff writer for the *New York Times Magazine*, you will probably twig that *God is My Broker* is a spoof.

It's also painfully close to reality. Apparently the US currently boasts a best-seller titled *The Business Secrets of Jesus*.

THE MAN who had to pick up the pieces when Peter Young was suspended from Morgan Grenfell Asset Management has got a new job.

Stuart Mitchell took over the running of Morgan Grenfell's European Growth Unit Trust and the European Capital Growth Fund in August 1996 shortly after it was revealed that Mr Young had not been following investment guidelines to the letter. Now Mr Mitchell has joined JO Hambro Investment Management as a director. He will be heading the specialist European equity unit from the middle of July.

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
UK	1.6385	1.0000	Oman	0.8200	0.9800
Brazil	1.9595	0.5700	Pakistan	0.2292	4.4250
China	1.9568	0.2765	Philippines	0.6736	3.8900
Czech Rep	0.9747	0.4089	Poland	0.5745	3.5040
Egypt	0.8693	0.3872	Portugal	0.5950	0.6245
France	1.2702	0.8200	Russia	0.6100	1.6200
Hong Kong	1.2097	0.7203	South Korea	0.6120	1.0235
Ireland	1.1485	1.1475	Spain	0.6290	1.1625
Italy	2.9602	0.2658	Turkey	0.2277	1.1545
Japan	1.2250	1.2250	Venezuela	0.5115	2.6241
Mexico	0.6243	0.5777	Yugoslavia	0.2050	2.1457
Netherlands	1.2714	1.2683	Zimbabwe	0.1700	2.2678
UK	1.6385	1.0000			

Other Spot Rates

Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	1.6385	1.0000	Oman	0.8200	0.9800
Brazil	1.9595	0.5700	Pakistan	0.2292	4.4250
China	1.9568	0.2765	Philippines	0.6736	3.8900
Czech Rep	0.9747	0.4089	Poland	0.5745	3.5040
Egypt	0.8693	0.3872	Portugal	0.5950	0.6245
France	1.2702	0.8200	Russia	0.6100	1.6200
Hong Kong	1.2097	0.7203	South Korea	0.6120	1.0235
Ireland	1.1485	1.1475	Spain	0.6290	1.1625
Italy	2.9602	0.2658	Turkey	0.2277	1.1545
Japan	1.2250	1.2250	Venezuela	0.5115	2.6241
Mexico	0.6243	0.5777	Zimbabwe	0.2050	2.1457
Netherlands	1.2714	1.2683			
UK	1.6385	1.0000			

Interest Rates

Country	3 mth	chg	1 yr	chg	2 yr	chg	5 yr	chg	10 yr	chg
UK	4.77	.022	4.77	.007	4.82	.008	5.16	.006	5.45	.005
Australia	5.2578	.2565	5.2677	.001	5.3032	.001	5.5044	.001	5.7444	.001
Austria	2.0111	.2038	2.0321	.0244	2.0444	.0242	2.0720	.0237	2.1027	.0235
Belgium	5.9295	.5970	5.9655	.5640	5.9826	.5620	6.0285	.5610</td		

Diprose looks to the 'old hands' to pull England through



Tony Diprose: Tough task
Photograph: Allsport

IF A natural leader always knows his own mind, Tony Diprose is bright enough to realise that a problem shared is a problem solved. The Saracens No 8 spent last season's domestic Premiership and cup campaigns picking the brains of a veritable Cabinet full of hardened decision makers — François Pienaar, Michael Lynagh and Philippe Sella were the support staff from heaven — but he may well discover this weekend that captaincy can also be a very lonely ordeal.

Asked to call the shots in the absence of the injured Matt Dawson, who had been handed the reins only as a result of Lawrence Dallaglio's shoulder problems and the various aches and pains affecting Martin Johnson and Tim Rodber,

England's stand-in rugby union captain has issued his rallying cry for the first Test against Australia. Chris Hewett in Brisbane reports

first 20 minutes, you don't really know what the hell is happening. "Yes, I'm captain, but I can't spend the whole game worrying about the other 14 in the side. I have a performance of my own to worry about."

The only flaw in the Diprose philosophy is that Cockerill and company hardly fall into the "been there, done that, got the T-shirt" category. The withdrawal of Dawson with knee trouble and the consequent emergence of Scott Benton as England's fifth scrum-half in 13 outings leaves the tourists with just 72 caps between them. In stark contrast, four of Saturday's Wallabies — Eales, Tim Horan,

national side may well bear fruit over the coming months, is certainly intent on putting years on his charges. Based in Caloundra, about 80 miles north of Brisbane on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, the Wallabies must make their way to training by mountain bike rather than the more customary luxury bus.

"Some of these blokes have spent the last couple of years in five-star hotel accommodation and we thought it might be useful to get them out of the plastic lifestyle and back to some normality," explained the Macqueen, the former ACT Brumbies tactician whose thoughtful stewardship of the press-ups on his players yes-

terday that they barely had the strength to turn a pedal.

Clive Woodward, Macqueen's English counterpart,

was rather more laid back, even though Dawson's sudden unavailability must have left him wondering if he would ever escape the jurisdiction of God's Law.

"People talk about us

being under pressure, but to my way of thinking we're under no pressure whatsoever," he said.

"There is a huge amount of enthusiasm for this contest. I think we'll be very competitive indeed

on Saturday and I'm convinced we'll do English rugby proud."

"I'm more than happy with Tony as captain — it was a tough call to choose Matt above him in the first place — and I'm perfectly confident that Scott will prove a high-class replacement

America

Gatland gaffe leaves Irish grounded

South Western Districts Ireland 27

IRELAND yesterday became the first touring team to lose to the South African side South Western Districts, following an unfortunate decision by their coach Warren Gatland. The New Zealander took off the tight-head prop Peter Clohessy and the flanker Trevor Brennan with 10 minutes to go when Ireland were leading 20-14, after which they failed to score any more points, going down 27-20.

Gatland was honest enough to admit his mistake, saying: "It could have been something completely different if they'd stayed on the field and I have only myself to blame for that. But as it is a learning experience for the team, I will not make the same mistake again."

Ireland outplayed the Eagles at the start. But they had to be satisfied with only a try from the No 8 Anthony Foley and trailed at the break 14-11 after their only other scores were two David Humphreys penalties. Ireland frequently took the

wrong options, keeping the ball close to the forwards, instead of running it wide. Nevertheless, they hit back to lead 20-14, thanks to three further Humphreys penalties as the Eagles forwards struggled to contain the Irish pack.

However, after Gatland replaced Clohessy and Brennan with John Hayes and David Corkery, everything started going wrong. The Ireland forwards were on the back foot and the Eagles took control, scoring 13 points without reply in the final 10 minutes.

South Western Districts: Tries Roberts, C Stoltz; Conversion: Barende; Penalties: Clohessy 4, Foley 2. Drop goal: Brenda Ireland: Try: Foley. Penalties: Humphreys 3. South Western Districts: Van Rensburg; Vorster; Cott; C Stoltz; du Toit; Barende (cap); Roberts; Wagner; Webb; Easquar; T Stoltz; Kapp; van Zyl; Fransman; Botha; Bothma.

Captain: R. Wallace; Keane, Henderson, Maggie Humphreys; OMeara; Fitzpatrick, Jackie Clohessy; O'Kely, Fletcher; Brennan; D. Wallace; Foley (capt).

● Cardiff have begun the search for a new head coach after Alex Evans, their Australian director of rugby, informed them that he would not be returning to Wales next season.

Scotland team, Digest, page 31

Pauls both old and new for England

Rugby League

By Dave Hadfield

TWO Pauls — Sterling and Deacon — from opposite ends of the age range are the most eye-catching selections in the 21-man England squad to face Wales next month. Although the side will carry the title Emerging England, his 33 years have not counted against Sterling, whose form for Leeds has marked him out as the best uncapped winger in the country this season.

"Age is no barrier if you are playing well enough," said the England and Great Britain coach, Andy Goodway, who has demonstrated an equally open-minded attitude towards young players by selecting the 19-year-old scrum-half Deacon, who has yet to start a Super League game for Bradford since arriving from Oldham this winter.

Deacon and Paul Johnson of Wigan played consistently in the Academy last season and we

are looking for some form of continuity," Goodway said.

The side that will meet the Welsh at Widnes on 19 July will be captained from stand-off by Steve Blakley, one of five players led the resistance in partnership

Dale remains determined

ADILIGENT 92 by Adrian Dale got Glamorgan out of trouble against Hampshire, bottom of the Britannic Assurance County Championship, at Southampton yesterday.

Dale batted for more than four hours before he became one of Dimitri Mascalenes' four victims as the champions made 269.

Hampshire lost John Stephenson before bad light and then rain intervened with the home side fought for one in the second over.

Northamptonshire's Franklyn Rose captured 5 for 65 as Lancashire struggled to 152 for a rain-shortened day at Northampton.

P.A. Cottee b McLaren 10

A. Dale c Aymer b Mascalenes 34

P. A. Maysen c Aymer b Mascalenes 10

P. A. Power c Mascalenes b Aymer 10

G. P. Morgan c Aymer b Mascalenes 5

Y.A. D. Shaw b James 10

S.D. Thomas c Aymer b Mascalenes 11

P. T. Parkin c Aymer b Mascalenes 12

O.T. Parkin b Mascalenes 13

E. Price c Aymer b Mascalenes 12

D. R. T. Ward c Aymer b Mascalenes 12

H. Williams c Aymer b Mascalenes 13

J. H. Williams

Gascoigne agent goes on attack

PAUL GASCOIGNE's agent yesterday accused Glenn Hoddle of being "brainwashed" into dropping the midfielder from his World Cup squad. Mel Stein believes Gascoigne has been treated like a "Nazi war criminal" and that by leaving him out of his final 22 for France, England coach has ruined his side's chances.

Stein said: "I think we've dropped the pilot and all we are left with is the Marie Celeste. It has become a ghost ship and I don't think we will do well. I wasn't very sure if we were going to win it even with Paul, but I think we had a real chance of getting to the quarter-finals or semi-finals. We will be lucky to get out of the group now."

Stein added: "OK, so he had a bad game in this meaningless tournament. Name me one player who didn't." The player's agent also refuted allegations that Gascoigne's admission he was drunk on Saturday night had affected his chances.

He added: "I see a lot in the papers about Paul having pressed another self-destruct button. He has not self-destructed, he has been destroyed. I think this was a deliberate campaign by many people in the media and they've got what they wanted. They haven't destroyed him, though, I think they have destroyed England and I think Glenn Hoddle has been brainwashed by what he's seen and heard in the media as much as us."

Brazil's goals still flow post Romario

GIOVANNI and Rivaldo scored first-half goals within a minute of each other as Brazil began their post-Romario era with a comfortable 3-0 victory over Andorra in St Ouen, France, yesterday.

Using Bebeto, who played the entire 90 minutes, in place of Romario, Brazil overran the tiny Pyrenees nation in their last international before the World Cup finals.

Giovanni gave Brazil the lead in the 26th minute and Rivaldo scored a minute later to put the four-times and defending world champions in control. Cafu added a third goal in the 53rd minute.

The defender Sinisa Mihajlovic scored in the second half to give Yugoslavia a 1-0 victory over fellow World Cup qualifiers Japan in an evenly balanced warm-up match in Lausanne yesterday.

The defender Walter Boyd, who has been criticised by coach René Simões for his poor form and for missing games, has been included in their squad after apologising for his behaviour.

Italy's hopes that Alessandro Del Piero would be ready to shine in France suffered a setback with the striker confessing that he is only half-way to full fitness and will not rush his return from injury.

The Juventus marksman was included in Italy's squad, even though a lingering right thigh strain has kept him away from training sessions for two weeks.

"It's true I feel good, but on a scale from one to 10, right now I am at five," Del Piero said. "It is clear that to play I have to be in good form. I don't want to take risks."

"There is definitely no room for false steps. The World Cup is long; it certainly does not end with the game against Chile."

Del Piero, who scored a career-best 31 goals for Juventus last season, was earmarked to start in attack alongside either Christian Vieri or Fabrizio Ravanelli. He was injured in

HOW THE 704 PLAYERS WILL LINE UP IN FRANCE

ARGENTINA

Goalkeepers
1 Carlos Roa (Malaga)
2 German Adrián Burgos (River Plate)
3 Pedro Carriero (Velez Sarsfield)
Defenders
4 Nestor Sensini (Parma)
5 Roberto Ayala (Napoli)
22 Javier Zanetti (Internacional)
3 Juan Sebastián Verón (River Plate)
12 Daniel Passarella (River Plate)
14 Nelson Vivas (Lugano)
4 Héctor Piñez (Milan)
Midfielders
10 Claudio Caniggia (Internacional)
2 Juan Sebastián Verón (River Plate)
15 Leonardo Asprilla (River Plate)
16 Daniel Gómez (River Plate)
10 Sergio Bergóñez (River Plate)
10 Arturo Ortega (Milan)
Forwards
9 Gabriel Batistuta (Parma)
21 Marcelo Delgado (Necaxa Club)
19 Hernán Crespo (Parma)
18 Abel Balbo (Roma)
Coach: Daniel Passarella.

AUSTRIA

Goalkeepers
1 Michael Kraml (Roma)
2 Franz Wohlleber (VfB Stuttgart)
21 Wolfgang Kneller (Austria Vienna)
Defenders
5 Wolfgang Feuerstein (Borussia Dortmund)
12 Martin Hütter (Leipzig)
13 Stefan Krammer (Austria Vienna)
4 Armin Schäfer (Austria Vienna)
3 Peter Schmid (Rapid Wien)
Middlefielders
20 Andreas Herf (Rapid Wien)
11 Michael Höglund (Wolfsburg)
22 Dieter Kühbauer (Red Bull Salzburg)
30 Roman Möthl (Sturm Graz)
14 Hannes Reindl (Sturm Graz)
24 Harald Scheier (Sturm Graz)
16 Sergio Herz (Rapid Wien)
8 Hans Pfleiderer (Werder Bremen)
Forwards
9 Ivica Vastic (Sturm Graz)
10 Harald Cerny (SV Rapid Wien)
7 Christian Gruber (Sturm Graz)
19 Anton Polster (Cologne)
11 Martin Amerhauser (SV Salzburg)
Coach: Herbert Prohaska

BELGIUM

Goalkeepers
1 Pieter De Wilde (Antwerp)
2 Danny Vanen (Club Brugge)
12 Danny Vanen (Antwerp Axa)
Defenders
11 Tom Boonen (Antwerp)
22 Eric Daelemans (Club Brugge)
2 Bertrand Cranson (Napoli)
4 Gordon Vilhena (Escolar Mourense)
19 Tom Boonen (Antwerp)
16 Tom Boonen (Antwerp)
11 Tom Boonen (Antwerp)
10 Tom Boonen (Antwerp)
14 Eric Scifo (Antwerp)
Midfielders
18 Tom Boonen (Antwerp)
20 Emile Hesposito (Standard Liège)
9 Tom Boonen (Antwerp)
10 Tom Boonen (Antwerp)
7 Marc Wilmots (Schalke 04)
19 Tom Boonen (Antwerp)
Coach: Georges Leekens

BRAZIL

Goalkeepers
1 Taffarel (Adelco Ministro)
2 Carlos Germano (Vasco da Gama)
3 Dany (Cruzeiro)

Defenders
12 Dunga (Flamengo)

17 Romário (Flamengo)

18 Roberto (Flamengo)

19 Edmundo (Flamengo)

21 Edmundo (Flamengo)

20 Bebeto (Flamengo)

22 Ronaldo (Internacional)

Coach: Mano Zagallo

Midfielders
10 Roberto Carlos (Real Madrid)
14 Kaká (Real Madrid)
15 Rivaldo (Barcelona)
16 Rivaldo (Real Madrid)
17 Ronaldinho (Flamengo)
18 Rivaldo (Real Madrid)
19 Rivaldo (Real Madrid)
20 Rivaldo (Real Madrid)
21 Rivaldo (Real Madrid)
22 Rivaldo (Real Madrid)

Forwards
7 Giovani (Barcelona)
11 Ronaldo (Flamengo)
12 Romário (Flamengo)
13 Romário (Flamengo)
14 Romário (Flamengo)
15 Romário (Flamengo)
16 Romário (Flamengo)
17 Romário (Flamengo)
18 Romário (Flamengo)
19 Romário (Flamengo)
20 Romário (Flamengo)

Coach: Georges Leekens

BULGARIA

Goalkeepers

12 Zdravko Drakoski (Spartak)

12 Borislav Mitev (Spartak)

12 Petar Kostov (Spartak)

12

Sky's no limit as Scottish bag £45m for élite

Football

By Clive White

THE NEW Scottish Premiership has hit the jackpot with a £45m four-year deal with Sky which will involve the screening of 30 live matches a year on Sunday evenings from next season after the Football League and English Premiership matches have finished.

The contract represents

something like a seven-fold increase on the deal done by the Scottish League, which was worth £12m and was for League, Scottish Cup and Coca-Cola Cup ties. The new deal embraces only league games and, with cup ties taken into account as well, the total value to Scottish football is probably between £80 and £85m.

The Premiership games, which will kick off at 6.05pm, will include three Old Firm

matches a season. The League's acting chief executive, Robert Wilson, confirmed that each of the new top-10 clubs will enjoy at least one visit from the Sky cameras each season.

Far from affecting attendances it is believed that it might actually enhance them. The Scots have been impressed with Sky's promotional and marketing ability south of the border and are hoping that increases in attendances in the

English Premiership will be replicated in Scotland.

The deal comes a week after Radio Five Live concluded a new £11.5m deal with the Premier League for three seasons, which also compares most favourably with the previous agreement which was worth just £500,000.

The BBC, who have lost out recently on FA Cup coverage, Formula One motor racing and one-day cricket, could ill afford another

loss; Talk Radio had expressed an interest in taking over when Five Live's current deal ended next year.

Five Live's audiences have increased substantially in the last year, hitting an all-time high of 5.6 million last month and earlier this year they won the Sony Station of the Year award.

The English Premier League, which is now in the second year of a £270m four-year contract with Sky, last week

turned down the satellite company's proposal to conduct a pay-per-view experiment next season.

It was concerned about the reaction of supporters to shifting still more matches to Sunday. They also believe that Sky's initiative was fired by a wish to bring in digital television rather than for the good of the game.

With Five Live's deal now in sync with Sky for the first time,

both contracts expiring in 2001, it means that should the League eventually want to go their own way and introduce digital TV and radio themselves in three years' time there will be a nice clean break from their current partners.

Gerard Houllier last night confirmed he is involved in talks with Sheffield Wednesday about the vacant manager's job, but he added that his services are in demand. The former French national coach

holds a high-profile position within the French Football Association, similar to that of the FA's technical director, Edward Wilkinson, but he has indicated that he wants to return to club management after the World Cup finals.

Sheffield United yesterday interviewed the Arsenal midfielder and former England international David Platt about their managerial vacancy.

World Cup squads, page 30

Stewart seeks staying power

Cricket

By Derek Pringle
at Edgbaston

THE BUILD-UP to the first Test of a summer series is always a predictable affair. Long before the Tories coined the slogan "New Labour - New Dangers", successive England captains were trotting out the "new season - new optimism" line that followed the inevitable series defeat abroad.

This time England have a new captain to put spin on the well-worn phrase and yesterday Alec Stewart was fazing them out like Shane Warne in an attempt to explain why England's fortunes might be different under him.

So far the Stewart script has been unerringly faithful to the original, with soundbites such as: "If we play to our potential" and "As long as we bring more consistency to our game", etc etc. Indeed, you sense that Stewart has been so inundated with tired old clichés throughout his career that he has even begun to believe them.

"I've spoken to all the players, either individually or in pairs," said Stewart, after a rain-interrupted practice at Edgbaston. "I've told them what I expect of them and what

England expects of them, which is to express themselves as they would do for their country."

Normally, this would count as good common sense, except that England players have tended to play that way all along, only to be tripped up by their Test opponents because of the weak nature of county cricket. What England need to find is the staying power necessary to compete against focused adversaries over a five-match series.

New captains are always under pressure to assert themselves and Stewart, though neither shy or retiring, is no different. Unsurprisingly, he has already made his mark by insisting that the England lions and coronet, placed for some reason above the heart for the one-day series, were put back in the middle of the sweater where they belong.

Taking on authority so early is a bold start and he will need to continue it on the field if England are to compete this summer. Australia apart, South Africa is cricket's most tempestuous competitors, though in some ways their instinct for defence when under pressure mirrors England's.

"I hope it is hard, tough cricket," Stewart said. "It's the way international cricket should be.

It's a competitive place. I know people are always worried about players overstepping the mark, but my main concern has always been respect for the game."

On the field, South Africa risk little, relying mainly on incisive spells from Allan Donald and Shaun Pollock to protect totals often cobbled together by lengthly, but not stellar batting order.

The cricket ought to be intense, particularly during the opening exchanges when both sides will be working to gain that

crucial early momentum. Having played here many times as Warwickshire's overseas players, Donald and Pollock will feel at home, although the pitch, according to Dennis Amiss, the Warwickshire secretary, "is not one they will recognise".

Over the past few years, Edgbaston has produced some tickle surfaces for Tests. In 1995, the one used against the West Indies not only left England beaten before lunch on the third day, but several batsmen nursing bruised chests and broken fingers.

"It looks flat, evenly grassed, and a touch damp," said Stewart, who admitted he would have probably bowled first had the match started yesterday and not this morning. Mind you, with the entire square spending most of yesterday under five acres of Brummellia, change will be minimal and Stewart's first toss in England could well be a vital one.

The uncertainty over the pitch's final appearance means that England will delay naming their 11 until this morning. With good weather forecast

over the next few days, they dare... this Test, with Nasser Hussain not dropping their only spinner and it will probably be between Dominic Cork and Dean Headley for the last bowling place.

Likewise, South Africa will decide between Lance Klusener and Brian McMillan, with Jonty Rhodes' recent run bing against Gloucestershire making sure of his berth in the middle-order.

It is, with his keeping duties bound to fire him, where Stewart has decided to bat as well, though he will start at four in

and that oft-used word "optimism", at least when applied to England's cricketers, will cease to have a hollow ring.

ENGLAND (from left): A Stewart (capt), A. Buttler (Surrey), M. Butcher (Warwick), M. Butcher (Surrey), N. Hussain (Essex), G. Thorpe (Surrey), D. Headley (Warwick), D. Headley (Warwick), D. Gough (York), A. Fraser (Middlesex), D. Headley (Kent).

SOUTH AFRICA (from left): W. Cronje (capt), M. Botha (Gauteng), G. Labuschagne (Gauteng), Kallis, D. Cullinan, J. Rhodes, S. Pollock, L. Klusener, A. Donald, P. Adams, B. Middell, Umphreys, R. Tiffey (Zim) and D. Shepherd (Eng).

TV umpire: J. Hampshire (Eng). Match referee: J. Burke (Eng).

County match reports, scoreboard, page 28



Photograph: David Ashdown

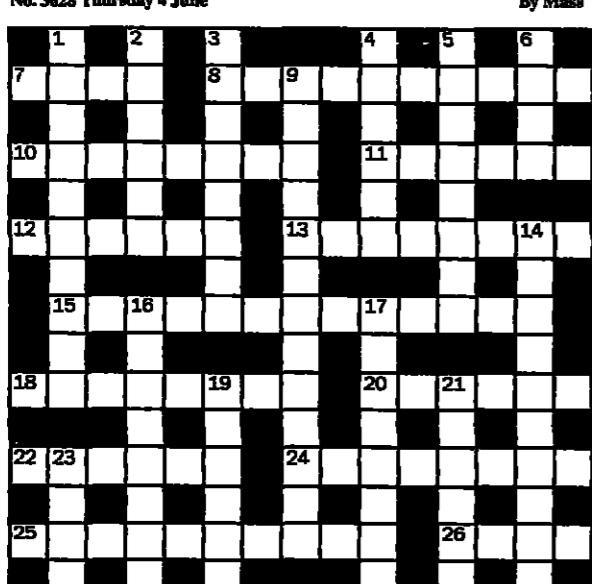
Mark Butcher (foreground) and his England captain, Alec Stewart, make final preparations for the first Test in the nets at Edgbaston yesterday

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3628 Thursday 4 June

By Mass

Wednesday's solution



ACROSS

- 7 Fiddle with bouncing old cheque (4)
- 8 Taking measure in and waffling (10)
- 10 Want support, grasping handle (6)
- 11 Judge is to sum up (6)
- 12 French sauce, mostly bitter (6)
- 13 It's well hooked, as far as bowler's concerned (8)
- 15 Not the mark of stable companions (13)
- 18 Muggins gets round with cash at end of bar (8)
- 20 Diversified art of a leading figure (6)
- 22 Treated to wallop, officer dropped (6)
- 24 Contributions to a comfortable retirement? (8)

DOWN

- 1 One cause of many a hold-up (10)
- 2 Pen vocal religious piece (6)
- 3 Far on in Lent? (8)
- 4 Private school - Queen's English needed for entry (6)
- 5 Is it conspicuous by absence during informal bite? (5,3)
- 6 Reverse some unsound opinion (4)
- 9 One new pipe I nearly bust - it's renewable (13)
- 14 Overcritical and cutting

about Italian priest (3-7)

16 Outlet for rising water, lake flooding weed (8)

17 Notes strain, reportedly in fearful state (8)

19 Captivate with finale on organ (6)

21 Shifts last of pegs and guys (6)

23 Pretty good love letter (4)

Pioline presses on as Kuerten collects fine

Tennis

By John Roberts
in Paris

HAPPY but weary, Cedric Pioline is relieved to be able to take a day's rest today while French tennis followers clear their throats in anticipation of a weekend of cheering his coronation as the first home champion since Yannick Noah in 1983.

Pioline appeared close to sinking into the clay yesterday before summoning the will to win his second consecutive five-set match in advancing to the French Open semi-finals. The local favourite knows that he cannot afford to offer Spain's Alex Corretja as many chances as he gave the gifted but erratic Moroccan, Hicham Arazi, yesterday.

Arazi, who started the match as France's second favourite, having lived in the country since his family moved from Casablanca when he was two years old, was able to convert only four of 21 break points and held two set points before losing the third set. Pioline prevailed, 3-6, 6-2, 7-6, 4-6, 6-3, after three hours and 42 minutes.

Having been unsuccessful in two Grand Slam finals against Pete Sampras, at Wimbledon and the United States Open, Pioline, who will be 29 in 12 days' time, is determined to match the persistence of Petr Korda, who won his first major title at 30 at the Australian Open in January.

Henri Leconte, in 1992, was

the last French semi-finalist. Leconte was also the last finalist, losing to Sweden's Mats Wilander in 1988.

Corretja, who could turn Sunday's final into a fiesta against one of his compatriots, Carlos Moya or Feliz Mantilla, overcame Filip Dewulf, of Belgium, in yesterday's other quarter-final, 7-5, 6-4, 6-3.

Gustavo Kuerten, the deposed champion, was fined \$7,000 (£4,300) yesterday after being disqualified from the men's doubles on Tuesday night for throwing his racket, which came close to hitting the umpire, Bruno Ribeiro, and landed in the crowd. Nobody was injured.

Kuerten's arrival at the airport on Tuesday night coincided with the injured Romario's departure from the World Cup, so his compatriot was able to make a public apology via Brazilian television, radio and newspapers.

In a statement at the tournament, he said: "I'm so sorry for what happened and I regret what I did. We were playing good tennis, even after the mistakes the umpire made. When we lost that point, on the set point, I tried to relieve my tension by throwing the racket in the direction of my chair. It escaped and went towards the chair umpire."

"In that moment I knew I was going to be disqualified. I know I made a big mistake and that the racket's place is in my hand. I want to make it clear that I never had the intention of hurting anyone."

"Last time we played here we had a very tough match," Seles said. "Martina is the No 1 player, so you know what she's going to give you. You have to play the best tennis that you can. That's what I will try to do."

Results, Digest, page 31

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